WALSINGHAM;

OR,

THE PUPIL OF NATURE.

A DOMESTIC STORY.

By

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THE WIDOW—VANCENZA, &c. &c. &c.

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WALSINGHAM;

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CHAP. XLVII.

THERE was a beautiful ſincerity in Miſs Woodford's mind, and an unaffected ſimplicity in her manners, that invited confidence and ſecured eſteem. She was wholly unconſcious of guile, and therefore implicitly relied on the rectitude of others. Poliſhed by a foreign education, ſhe diſclaimed the conceited formality of modern faſtidiouſneſs; at the ſame time that a correct judgment, joined to extreme delicacy of ſentiment, kept her mind wholly uncontaminated by the

vices and deceptions of faſhionable ſociety. To theſe attractions Nature had given a perſon beautifully commanding! tall, fair, finely formed, with light auburn hair, and eyes beaming with ſenſibility that beſpoke the pureſt and moſt gentle affections. She had yet a ſtronger claim to intereſt my feelings; a claim, not more ſingular than dangerous! She reſembled, fatally, ſtrikingly reſembled, Iſabella.

Her attentions were unremitting: ſhe procured books from the library of her couſin Lady Kencarth, and we generally paſſed many hours of the day in reading the beſt authors. I had been accuſtomed to ſtudy, when Iſabella was my companion: the recollection of paſt ſcenes inceſſantly occurred; and, driven as I was from every hope; perſecuted by fortune; exiled from my native home; with an heart no leſs proud than ſuſceptible; the ſoothing voice, the ſympa-

thizing ſighs, and the generous ſolicitude which Miſs Woodford diſplayed, afforded me the only conſolation I was capable of receiving.

The poſt returned, but it brought no letters either from Bath or Glenowen. My inquietude augmented daily, and my poverty preſented a proſpect replete with horrors. I could not bear to ſubſiſt on Mrs. Woodford's bounty, and I was not at liberty to make any experiment, whereby I might obtain the means of life. My health began to decline; a perpetual fever preyed upon my ſpirits; my mind, ſtruggling betwixt pride and ſenſibility, became indolent, and I could entertain no thought with tolerable ſatisfaction but that of annihilation. Yes, Roſanna! I ſhudder while I write the words—ſelf-annihilation!

This dreadful propenſity poſſeſſed my imagination inceſſantly. It was the ſubject of my daily thoughts, my nightly

dreams. I longed, I panted for repoſe, while I felt a ſilent monitor within, reprobating the only act by which I could obtain it. The evident ſolicitude which Amelia evinced, tended rather to augment than to diminiſh my fatal propenſity. Every kind and gentle word reminded me of Iſabella; that Iſabella, whoſe dawning beauties charmed me; that mild endearing angel! whoſe preſence had enlivened the ſolitude of my early days, and filled my mind with hopes fatal and illuſive!

Hour after hour, as my heart became ſoftened by ſorrow, as a portion of its fortitude waſted, Amelia's kindneſs ſeemed to ſupply the vacuum, till ſhe became in ſome meaſure a part of my exiſtence. I knew that I was miſerable; but I was no leſs ſenſible that, without her ſociety, I ſhould be ſtill many degrees more wretched; and ſharing but a ſmall portion of worldly conſolation, I was doubly grateful,

grateful, while I reflected, that almoſt the whole of what I did experience originated in her generous ſolicitude.

I had in confidence unfolded to Amelia the leading events of my diſaſtrous life; only concealing the names of thoſe who were the prominent figures in the dark and mournful hiſtory. Often did ſhe condemn the capricious conduct which diſgraced Iſabella, and the volatile libertiniſm which contaminated the noble generous mind of Sir Sidney. The ſordid heart of Lady Aubrey was the theme of perpetual abhorrence; and the gallant veteran, who had become my voluntary patron, frequently claimed a tear of enthuſiaſtic admiration: yet the whole group was known to her merely as individuals; their names, rank, and ſituation I cautiouſly concealed. There was a fatality in every thing I undertook; and I was, by the moſt untoward events, added to a reſerve of conduct

which was wholly unnatural to my feelings, deſtined to carry on the lengthening tale of ſorrow, till the cloſing ſcene ſhall conſign me and my misfortunes to the oblivion of the grave.

I had been the inmate of Mrs. Woodford's hoſpitable manſion near three weeks, when ſhe received a letter from her former lodger, acquainting her that he ſhould be in London in ten or twelve days at fartheſt, and requeſting that the apartments which he uſually occupied, might be ready for his reception. The letter was read before Amelia and myſelf; ſhe trembled, grew pale, and, to conceal her diſtreſs, abruply quitted the room. Her conduct ſurprized me. I endeavoured in vain to account for agitation ſo marked and ſudden. Mrs. Woodford paid little attention to Amelia's diſtreſs; and ſhortly after leaving me, I entered into a train of reflections on the ſubject. I ſhuddered to interpret

pret the ſymptoms of inquietude, while vanity whiſpered—for vanity is more or leſs the inmate of every boſom—yes, Roſanna, it whiſpered with the ſtrong emphaſis of nature——Amelia loves you!

Whatever is gratifying to ſelf-love we moſt readily believe. For the firſt time I dreaded to meet Miſs Woodford; I doubted my own fortitude; I examined my heart; I beheld its lacerated fibres, wounded by jealouſy, neglected by ſcorn! I recollected Amelia's ſtrong reſemblance to Iſabella; I ſhrunk—I trembled! I would have flown—but whither could I go? My ſituation was perilous and perplexing. At this moment Amelia entered the apartment—I would have paſſed her, and eſcaped, but ſhe caught my arm, and gently detained me: "Whither are you flying?" ſaid ſhe, with a tone that pierced my heart; "I have brought ſome books, and wiſh you to read with

me. We ſhall not paſs many days more together."

As ſhe ſpoke her voice became tremulous, and a convulſive movement about her lip diſcovered the perturbation of her boſom.

She placed chairs near a window, and leading me towards one of them, I took my ſeat without the power to reſiſt. "How often ſhall I ſit in this dear corner, Walſingham?" ſaid ſhe; "and how ſincerely ſhall I lament that hours of happineſs are ſeldom ordained to be laſting!"

I made no reply—my heart beat high with gratitude: I opened the book—it was a French edition of Eſtelle. Again ſhe interrupted me—

"In a few weeks—perhaps days—O God! what ſhall I be?"

"Happy, I truſt," ſaid I, not daring to encounter her eyes, or to aſk an explanation of her conduct.

"Miſer-

" Miſerable !" exclaimed Amelia.

" Heaven forbid !" ſaid I, cloſing the book, and looking fearfully towards her: ſhe bluſhed—became more agitated—and, riſing haſtily, retired to the other window. After remaining there for ſeveral minutes—while I continued in a bewildering reverie—ſhe again returned; and, with a beautiful ſmile of ſelf reproof, which had alſo ſomething in it of conſcious exculpation, ſhe exclaimed—" What a fool am I !"

Though I dreaded the power of her affection, I was piqued at the very ſhadow of her treating it with levity. She took the volume from my hand, and, opening it, read the following paſſage—

" Fuis, malheureux! fuis, il en eſt tems encore. Dans un inſtant tu ne le pourras plus. C'eſt ici que l'amour t'attend pour te ſoumettre à ſon empire. Que je te plains! tu ne le connais pas

ce redoutable amour! Ah! puiſſes-tu ne le connoître jamais! puiſſes-tu ne jamais ſentir les maux que cauſe l'abſence, les pleurs que fait verſer la crainte, les tourmens de la jalouſie, et les chagrins ſans raiſon, et les torts que l'on ne veut pas croire! Iſidore! mon chere Iſidore! je ſuis moi-même un triſte exemple des malhereux que fait l'amour! Tremble de devenir encore plus à plaindre que moi!—tremble - - -"

As ſhe concluded theſe words, ſhe burſt into an agony of tears, and throwing the volume on the ground, ruſhed out of the apartment.

"Is it ſo?" exclaimed I. "It muſt be ſo! my prophetic heart did not deceive me.—Amelia, the gentle, the angelic Amelia, loves the forlorn, the wretched Walſingham!"

The joy of that moment was ſudden and electric! I, who had been rejected,

trifled

trifled with, deſpiſed, forgotten! in the midſt of poverty and diſgrace! hopeleſs, and meditating the moſt terrible of all deciſions, found a generous amiable woman, who loved me—who dared avow that love! I was bewildered with contending conflicts.—Reſentment for paſt injuries, pride, ſenſibility, revenge, ruſhed into my heart, and almoſt deprived me of reaſon. I retired to my chamber, made excuſes for not appearing during the remainder of the evening, and paſſed the night ſleepleſs, bewildered, wild, afflicted, and yet gratified. Yes, Roſanna, ſupremely, exquiſitely gratified! to know that in this reſtleſs ſphere of perſecution, one gentle, feeling boſom throbbed with affection for the ill-fated Walſingham!

When hidden fears the boſom tear,
And love no longer cheats the breaſt:
Hope comes to break the ſpells of care,
And give that tortured boſom Reſt!

The world looks gay! the ſhadows paſt,
All nature ſmiles, by Fancy dreſt;
But ſoon the day of bliſs o'ercaſt,
Will prove how ſhort a lover's Reſt!

The gentle breeze that o'er the main
Scarce ſeems to move the halcyon's neſt,
Soon yields to Winter's potent reign,
And ſtorms ſucceed the tranſient Reſt!

Then let the wretch whom pleaſure flies,
Ne'er think that rapture's ſons are bleſt;
For Apathy alone ſupplies
The ſweet, the envied balm of REST!

CHAP. XLVIII.

On the following day Miſs Woodford ſeemed to be leſs agitated, and converſed with me in a tone of voice more determined than I had ever before witneſſed; ſhe appeared to be perfectly miſtreſs of herſelf, and to have reſolved on ſome event which had rendered her mind entirely decided. I was little pleaſed with her evident placidity: the dawning ray of conſolation which beamed through her eyes, when ſuffuſed with tears of ſenſibility, ſeemed wholly to vaniſh when they encountered mine with the ſober dignity of returning reaſon. I wondered at the change; I was piqued at it, becauſe I fancied that I was again the dupe of my own ſelf-love, and the make-game of a capricious girl. The day paſſed in ſullen chagrin on my part, and

and diſtant politeneſs on hers. Mrs. Woodford regretted our approaching ſeparation, and Amelia ſmiled whenever it was mentioned. I was at a loſs to interpret the meaning of ſuch extraordinary conduct, and waited impatiently for the hour of elucidation.

On the following day Mrs. Woodford being engaged with ſome faſhionable morning viſitors, I availed myſelf of the opportunity, and quitted my apartment in ſearch of Amelia.—I found her in her muſic-room with her maſter, and requeſted that they would allow me the gratification of augmenting their party; ſhe only replied by a bow of acquieſcence, and the morning's ſtudies went on without interruption. She ſung and touched the harp moſt enchantingly. The day's practice being finiſhed, her maſter took his leave; ſhe roſe, and would have departed alſo; but I detained her; ſhe did not

not ſo far flatter me as to fear a private interview; the ſelf-collected ſerenity of her countenance convinced me that I was to her an object of perfect indifference.

"I congratulate you, Miſs Woodford," ſaid I, bowing coldly and reſpectfully; "I moſt ſincerely congratulate you on the ſudden and commanding ſeverity of your conduct. The ſoft ſenſibility, the beautiful confuſion of your manner, when laſt I had the happineſs of ſeeing you unobſerved by maternal eyes, rendered you too dangerous an object for me to contemplate with ſafety to my repoſe. You are now the proud, the faſhionable Miſs Woodford; as ſuch I can reſpect, I can admire you."

"I deſire no more," ſaid Amelia, with ſome heſitation; "for I ſeldom permit my hopes to lead me beyond the probability of ſucceſs. You are the devoted lover of an unknown object; and

and Heaven forbid that I ſhould inflict a jealous pang on any heart that is worthy of your affections."

The formal and placid manner with which ſhe pronounced theſe chilling words mortified, and at the ſame time irritated my feelings. She watched my countenance with a fixed and ſteady gaze. I made no reply—She again addreſſed me.

"Your friendſhip, your eſteem I may ſtill accept, without violating my engagements to a worthy being who claims that heart, which, had I the power to beſtow it, ſhould be——" She pauſed.

"Do not heſitate, Amelia; pronounce the word," ſaid I, "whether it be hoſtile to my hopes, or deciſive of my fate—I am prepared for either."

"Then," ſaid ſhe, changing colour, and advancing towards the door, "had this fooliſh feeling heart been mine to give,

give, you would have been its maſter—but in a few, a very few days, I ſhall be——"

"What?" cried I, eagerly.

"The wife of another!" replied Miſs Woodford, ſighing: "the huſband of my mother's choice will claim my hand; but my days will be devoted to miſery! From this hour we muſt only meet in ſociety. I cannot, without violating the propriety of virtue, allow you another interview of this nature. I knew not that your affections were engaged—I fancied, indeed I hoped, that they were not. As it is, I muſt learn to bear my adverſe fortune—to look forward with reſignation—and to forget you!" She was going.

"Yet ſtay, Amelia," ſaid I, "ſtay only a moment, and hear my laſt acknowledgments. Your kindneſs, your generoſity will overwhelm me. Your virtues deſerve a better fate than that which

which would await you as my wife—Honour me with your friendſhip, your eſteem—"

"I comprehend you, Walſingham," ſaid Miſs Woodford, burſting into tears; "you are ſufficiently explicit. Inflict not a new pang of humiliation—I do not deſerve to ſuffer—We muſt part for ever!"

She tore herſelf from my trembling hand, which had not power to detain her, and ruſhed out of the apartment.

At dinner I only found Mrs. Woodford.—Amelia, wiſhing to avoid meeting me, was abſent on a viſit to Lady Kencarth. The day appeared inſufferably tedious, till we were relieved by the pleaſantry and wit of my friend Optic. Miſs Woodford, late in the evening, ſent a meſſage to inform her mother that ſhe ſhould accompany Lady Kencarth to the opera, and from thence to a ſupper at the Ducheſs of Riversford's, which

which would detain her till a very late hour; I therefore reſigned all hopes of ſeeing or converſing with her, at leaſt for that night.

In the courſe of the evening we were abruptly broke in upon by Doctor Pimpernel.—He entered the drawing-room before I was aware of his approach, and it was then too late to avoid him. My cold and ceremonious greeting convinced him of the contempt in which I held his neglect of me in the moment of calamity, and for a ſhort time checked his natural flow of boiſterous loquacity. But on Mrs. Woodford's quitting the room, the torrent which had gradually augmented by conſtrained ſilence, broke forth with redoubled fury: the firſt ſymptom of his recovery from the confuſion of conſcious unworthineſs, was his inquiries after Amelia. "She is in love with you, my noble fellow—by G—d, ſhe

ſhe is!" exclaimed the doctor; "and you muſt have her."

"I underſtand that Miſs Woodford's hand is already engaged," ſaid I.

"So much the better," cried the doctor; "you will have the greater chance of ſucceſs. Beſides, ſhe is going to marry a fellow, who was deſtined by nature to wear the badge of nobility: His brows were meant to exhibit the honours of his family."

"But has the girl's innocence no claim to the conſideration of an honourable mind?" ſaid Mr. Optic.

"Every claim," replied the doctor; "and therefore Mr. Montagu will do well to take it out of ſuch precarious keeping."

"You mean that he ſhould rob her of her repoſe, in order to prove his regard for its ſafety, then! This is ſtrange doctrine!" cried Mr. Optic; "but

" but the preſcriptions of all thoſe who profeſs to mend the conſtitution, are generally experimental."

" There is nothing like it!" ſaid the doctor. " What is the broad ſun of intellectual light! but an experimental circle of new and extenſive knowledge? The effulgent lamp of liberty—"

" Chears with its rays the moſt unworthy objects," ſaid I, " while unprotected innocence is ſuffered to languiſh in a priſon."

The doctor was diſconcerted; he hemmed, coughed, and rubbed his forehead, but made no anſwer.

" Yet," continued I, fixing my eyes on his countenance, " there are men who, while they are undermining the peace of unoffending intimates, preach the language of univerſal benevolence! who, while perſecuted virtue trembles at the arrogance of vice, uphold the profligate and ſtigmatize the innocent!

Men

Men who, the promoters of licentious oppreſſion, the enemies of domeſtic happineſs, are the brawlers for philanthropy, and at the ſame moment the deſtroyers of every ſocial comfort."

"I believe it, I believe it, my noble fellow!" cried the doctor. "What a fund of knowledge you poſſeſs! I have long made ſimilar obſervations, and lament that ſuch men ſhould be permitted to diſgrace the ſcenes of humanized ſociety. But, as my book ſays, 'The whole maſs muſt be purified before the head will recover its original ſanity—the fountain cannot flow clear while the ſource is muddy.' Read my voluminous work—my world of information—my Barley-water panacea—my immortal recipe for degenerated humanity! But it cannot laſt long; intellect begins to ſet things right! Virtue will electrify—it will awaken the torpedo—it will take its proper ſphere—it will

mount

mount like phlogiſticated air—it will prove the inevitable and tremendous *piacularis* of the great catalogue of diſaſters which have too long diſgraced the wide theatre of the univerſe! Doleful and I know how things are! we think like men—we anticipate like prophets—we reaſon like philoſophers! *A propos!*—Mind, Doleful, that you notice my book in your next patriotic poem. By the tranſcendent powers of ſublime harmony, you are the only poet that ever lived in this or any other country! Excepting my Barley-water work, your laſt production is the pureſt, the moſt enlightened in our language."

The ſapient philoſopher was ſtopped ſhort in his incomprehenſible rhapſody by the return of Mrs. Woodford. The converſation changed, and I retired to my apartment little ſatisfied with the events of the preceding twelve hours.

CHAP. XLIX.

My mind being much depreſſed on the following morning, I declined going down to breakfaſt. Mrs. Woodford, fearing that my abſence proceeded from indiſpoſition, made me a viſit of inquiry, and expreſſed her concern in language ſo friendly, that my ſpirits experienced a momentary renovation; I ſtill requeſted that ſhe would excuſe me at dinner, and remained in my chamber, wholly ſubdued by melancholy reflections.

The period rapidly advanced when I ſhould be obliged to ſeek a new aſylum. Almoſt exhauſted by the perpetual inquietude of my ſituation, I began to think that even the moſt dreadful certainty was preferable to the hopes and fears of an undecided fate. I was ſo accuſtomed to perpetual changes of ſorrow,

that

that any fixed plan of miſery would have been a kind of termination far more deſirable than a variety of wretchedneſs. I could have reconciled my mind to any one event, however terrible; but the varying griefs, the daily, the hourly encroachments of ſorrow, the hydra-headed perſecuting calamities that inceſſantly roſe up, eternally expoſing my fortitude to new trials, had wearied me into deſpair, and was at length become inſupportable.

With regard to Miſs Woodford, I was no leſs perplexed than I was with the inauſpicious proſpect of my fortune. I could have loved her, had I not known Iſabella; and yet, having known her, Amelia, by reminding me of her lovelineſs, could not be an object of indifference to my heart: I could have paſſed all my hours in contemplating the one, merely becauſe ſhe reſembled the other; but the inſtant that imagination whiſpered ſomething more than eſteem,

ſomething that attached by ſtronger bonds than common admiration, love preſented the original idol to my faſcinated fancy, and reproved my apoſtacy at the ſame moment that it confirmed my deſpair.

I was grieved to find that Miſs Woodford would ſhortly be torn from my ſociety.—She was the only ſolace I could find, alone as I was, even amidſt multitudes of men: her abſence would leave a vacuum, which time would not have power to ſupply. I had endured the torture of unboſoming my long-treaſured griefs; I had found in her a kind and ſympathizing ſpirit; ſhe gave me ſigh for ſigh; ſhe ſeemed to feel more intereſted every moment, as I proceeded in the dark account of ſorrow. I felt certain, that nothing in this ſcene of ſublunary anguiſh could ever again induce me to retrace the progreſs of my weary journey.

Roſanna!

Roſanna! how little did I know my deſtiny!—how far was my imagination removed from that hope which might have preſented a gentle and compaſſionating angel, like yourſelf!

In the evening Mrs. Woodford made me a ſecond viſit, and propoſed that I ſhould accompany her and Amelia to a maſquerade in Portland-place. "I have tickets," ſaid ſhe; "and as your diſguiſe will prevent the poſſibility of your being diſcovered, you muſt not refuſe to be our *chaperon*."

I made many excuſes, pleaded indiſpoſition, and ſtill a more powerful objection, a diſlike to every ſpecies of diſſipated amuſement. Mrs. Woodford rallied me on the pedantic faſtidiouſneſs of my refuſal, promiſed to return early, and aſſured me that the houſe would be thronged with the firſt people in the courtly circles.

"The fair hoſteſs," ſaid ſhe, "is the very model of elegance; the high prieſteſs of taſte, and the arbitreſs of all our faſhionable amuſements. You will meet half the nobility in the kingdom; your imagination cannot form an idea of the ſplendour and delight which will gratify your eyes, and exhilarate your ſpirits."

Amelia ſaid but little; yet one intreating glance of hers almoſt decided my reſolution; when Mrs. Woodford continued—

"You muſt go; indeed you muſt. All the world will be there, to laugh at poor Lady Emily Delvin, whom Mrs. Heartwell has invited for no other purpoſe."

"I will attend you," ſaid I.

The hope of hearing what was become of Iſabella determined me inſtantly to accept the invitation. Dominos were provided

provided for Mrs. Woodford and myſelf; but my heart throbbed with agony when Amelia preſented herſelf in the ſimple habit of a Welſh peaſant girl—a ſpecies of diſguiſe in which I had often ſeen Iſabella, when ſhe entered into the ſpirit of the village *fêtes* near Glenowen, and which always rendered her more beautiful than the moſt ſtudied adornments of faſhion could have done. As ſhe came into the room I ſtarted as though I had ſeen a ſpectre.—The ſhort jacket, half concealing her boſom, and the large black hat, adorned with a wild bouquet of flowers, which ſhaded her countenance, throwing her features into ſhadow, concealed every diſſimilarity, and ſhe was the exact counterpart of Iſabella.

I gazed like an idiot—Miſs Woodford ſmiled—She knew that I was born in Wales; and, with bewitching attention, aſſured me that ſhe wore the Cam-

brian habit in compliment to me.—I had not power to thank her, my whole ſoul was abſorbed in contemplating the perfect reſemblance of that divinity whoſe faſcinations were yet unbroken; and who, notwithſtanding all her follies, was ſtill the ſupreme idol of my heart's warmeſt affections.

Before midnight we repaired to Mrs. Heartwell's—the rooms were crowded; the lively hoſteſs indefatigable in the taſk of pleaſing—and the company animated by the ſplendour of ſurrounding objects. Mrs. Woodford was ſoon recognized by many of her right-honourable connections, and the lovely Amelia was frequently committed to my charge, while her mother joined in the gant clatter of refined nonſenſe. The indifference with which Miſs Woodford mingled in the brilliant circle, confirmed the exalted opinion which I before entertained

tertained of her underſtanding; and we ſeated ourſelves on a ſofa to contemplate the motley group before us.

We had not been there many minutes, when a maſk, taking his place beſide us, looked earneſtly at Miſs Woodford, and with a ſigh of admiration exclaimed—"Nymph of the mountains! more lovely than Hebe! more chaſte than Diana! what ſtrange faſcination could have brought thee to this ſcene of ſplendid animation? Haſt thou no ſiſter wood-nymph, no guardian genii of thy native ſolitude to guide thy wandering footſteps through the mazes of diſſipation?"

Miſs Woodford anſwered—"Yes; the power of love, which brought me hither, has conſigned my truant footſteps to the care of Virtue!"

"The power of Virtue has long been annihilated in theſe enchanting regions," replied the maſk. "Here only plea-

ſure reigns, mocking the dull and freezing chains of chaſtity."

This libertine remark was accompanied with a gentle preſſure of the hand, while Miſs Woodford roſe abruptly from her ſeat to break the converſation.

A ſecond maſk now joined us; and, after gazing ſtedfaſtly at me for ſeveral minutes, the unknown viſitor exclaimed —"Gods! were ſuch women formed to bleſs plebeian arms?"

I felt the ſarcaſtic perſonality, and could ſcarcely command my tongue.—The maſk continued—

"Shall innocence and beauty be condemned to the degrading embraces of imputed vice?"

My blood boiled with indignation.—Amelia conjured me, in a whiſper, not to notice the implied inſult—"It is only an effort of impertinent curioſity," ſaid ſhe; "and, by diſcovering who you are, ſome empty fool will be gratified,

while

while you expoſe yourſelf to every ſpecies of peril."

The maſk continued to follow us, and was ſhortly after joined by the other domino, who had addreſſed Miſs Woodford while ſitting on the ſofa.—A female alſo augmented our group, and with moſt exalted effrontery ſeizing my arm, entered into familiar converſation. I had obſerved her, and the two original perſecutors, in cloſe converſation on our entering the room; I therefore concluded that they were known to each other.

"Pretty nymph of Cambria's miſty hills!" cried the lady; "what will thy abſent ſhepherd ſay, when he hears of thy inconſtancy? when he is told that his innocent and blooming maid beſtows her favours on a vulgar lover? Where is the plighted faith of ruſtic paſſion? where the meek delicacy of uncontaminated manners? There is

a little bird perched on a lofty tree not far from hence who will tell all."

"And upon my conſcience," cried a maſk in the character of Silence, "when all is tould there is nothing at all to tell. I have been praching morality to half the company, and nobody underſtands the maning of my doctrines, except a young Welſhman, who, by his dialect, was born on the continent. There is nothing ſo vulgar and ridiculous as betraying one's country by the manes of one's tongue."

This maſk I now diſcovered to be Mrs. O'Liffy; but the mention ſhe made of 'a young Welſhman born on the continent,' rouſed my heart to the moſt violent palpitation; for hope flattered me with the idea that it might be Sir Sidney Aubrey.

"Where did you leave the young Welſhman?" ſaid I—"How is he dreſt? what party does he come with?"

"Ah

"Ah now! be azey!" cried Mrs. O'Liffy. "The lad has a little ſmart doxey of his own—as pretty a girl as ever tripped over the ſwate bogs of Ireland! and you want to be after making miſchief, I warrant you! ar'n't you content with one dear crater, but you muſt be monopolizing all the world, leaving the reſt of the creation to live alone in ſolitude?"

Still I intreated her to ſatisfy my inquiries, and ſtill ſhe refuſed. Perceiving no chance of obtaining information from Mrs. O'Liffy, I reſolved to purſue my own reſearches. I wandered amidſt the mazy groups, examined every pair of bright eyes, that, like ſtars, gleamed through their ſable curtain, but in vain.—Nothing was to be found like Iſabella. Miſs Woodford, mortified by my inattention, propoſed quitting the rooms. "I need not draw you from the point of attraction," ſaid ſhe with a

tone of reproach; "one of Mrs. Heartwell's ſervants will call me a chair, and I can return, alone, if my mother wiſhes to remain here longer.

"Pardon me, I conjure you to pardon me," ſaid I. "My inattention will ſcarcely admit of an excuſe—but you are all goodneſs! The perſon whom I wiſh to diſcover, is a dear friend; one from whom I have been too long eſtranged, and whoſe welfare deeply intereſts me. I knew not of her being in town."

"I underſtood that the perſon was a man!" ſaid Amelia, with evident ſurpriſe. I had not the power to deceive her. I ſcorned the idea of uttering a falſehood upon ſo intereſting a ſubject, and therefore inſtantly replied, "No, Amelia; the object of my inquietude is a woman:—her! to whom I gave my heart before I had examined the ſentiments of that boſom, in which I de-

poſited all my hopes of terreſtrial happineſs."

"I will return home," ſaid Miſs Woodford, taking my arm, and trembling. "Pray conduct me to my chair, and make my excuſes to my mother. I will not interrupt a purſuit that promiſes you ſo much delight. I will leave you to ſeek the happy mortal, whoſe power can draw you from the ſociety of friendſhip! She will be your future conſolation!—your companion! She is not the promiſed wife of another; and you will find with her that felicity which I have not the power to beſtow." Her faultering voice convinced me that had her maſk been withdrawn, I ſhould have ſunk to the earth with ſhame, for having extorted a tear of reproof from thoſe eyes which had ſo often beamed with friendſhip and affection, for a wretch unworthy of her notice.

"I will

"I will attend you home," ſaid I. "The juſt reproach which you have involuntarily uttered, has confirmed my deciſion. I will not draw upon my heart the pang of conſcious ingratitude."

"Then I command you, if you value my eſteem, to ſtay," cried Miſs Woodford. "I diſdain that proffered ſacrifice, which is the offſpring of gratitude alone. You might be grateful to the moſt indifferent object, where you fancied that your heart retained a ſenſe of obligation. I ſhall depart alone. This is our laſt interview, unkind, ungracious Walſingham!"

As ſhe concluded theſe words ſhe broke from me, and ruſhed towards the door;—I followed. She hurried down the ſtairs, and deſired one of Mrs. Heartwell's ſervants to call a chair. I ſtill attended her, when a group which followed us thronged the hall—and a voice ſtruck

ſtruck my ear with an electric force that almoſt deprived me of my ſenſes; it was the voice of Iſabella!

I quitted Miſs Woodford's hand, and ruſhed among the crowd. The maſks had conſiderably augmented, and all was buſtle and confuſion. The number of black dominos nearly preſented a ſombre ſimilarity, which levelled all forms and features to one gloomy maſs of inſipidity. The only characters that met my eyes, were a Lady, in the robe, and with the attendant doves, of Venus; Lady Fubſy in the character of Zephyrus; little Caſino as Diana; Mrs. Winkwell as a blue-eyed nun; Lady Ethiop as Deſdemona; a Melpomene, laughing convulſively at the ſcene of confuſion; and a Thalia, weeping for the loſs of a portrait ſet with brilliants, which had been ſnatched from her boſom by a maſk in the character of Juſtice; while a coxcomb, dreſt as an Anchoret, was whiſpering

whiſpering ſoft rapturous nonſenſe in her ear, and conſoling her with the celebrated but unappropriate lines,

"On her white breaſt a ſparkling *croſs* ſhe wore,
"Which Jews might kiſs, and Infidels adore."

This ſilly remark was drowned in the inceſſant gabble of Mrs. O'Liffy, in the character of Silence; while Lady Fubſy, with a voice more like Boreas than Zephyrus, vociferated—"Take care! you will break my wings." The Venus now loſt her doves; Miſs Caſino began to be heartily tired of her diſguiſe; the blue-eyed Winkwell ſtole off with a handſome black friar; and the icy Anchoret returned to the rooms with his weeping Thalia, to arrange a delicious *tête à tête* for the enſuing evening.

A chair was brought into the hall; and, juſt as Amelia was haſtening towards it, I obſerved a lady ſtepping into a carriage at the door, dreſſed in a black gauze

gauze robe, ſpangled with ſilver. A gentleman in a domino followed. They ſeated themſelves; and as the coach drew rapidly from the portico, I perceived (the lady unmaſking) the features of Miſs Hanbury. The impulſe of the moment wholly ſubdued the powers of recollection and the decorum of *bien ſeance*, while, bruſhing by Lady Fubſy, and awkwardly tearing off one of her tranſparent wings, I ruſhed amidſt the crowd. I was haſtening to the portico, but the unzephyrlike hand of the angry Lady Fubſy forcibly held me, with "Sir, Sir, you have got my wing."

"Do not detain me!" ſaid I, ſcarcely knowing what I uttered; "I am flying in purſuit of a lady—"

"Not with my wing, by Heavens!" cried Lady Fubſy, interrupting me, and ſtill graſping my arm. The whole circle laughed. I diſengaged the ſilver pinion which had been entangled in the

ſerpentine

ſerpentine trimmings of my domino, and darted into the ſtreet. A coach, which was ſtill hemmed in by the ſtoppage of carriages, inſtantly met my eye: it was of the ſame colour as that in which I had ſeen Iſabella. I opened the door, and without ceremony entered. But how ſhall I deſcribe my aſtoniſhment, when I found myſelf ſeated oppoſite to Mr. Winkwell and Miſs Caſino! The young lady, inſtantly placing her maſk before her face, ſhrieked. The inconſtant huſband demanded my name, and the cauſe of ſuch an outrage. I made a brief apology, and quitting the coach as ſuddenly as I had entered it, again darted along the ranks of noiſe and confuſion. After peeping into at leaſt a dozen carriages, and finding nearly as many old acquaintances with new faces,—none of whom wiſhed to be recognized,—I haſtened back in ſearch of Miſs Woodford. She was not to be found. I began to

loſe

loſe all patience, when a maſk addreſſed me:—

"Dear Knight-errant," ſaid the fair forlorn, "will you ſee me to my carriage? I am really in diſtreſs for a *Ciceroné*; and, unleſs you will have the gallantry to aid me, I ſhall be immolated by the abominable *canaille!*"

Almoſt unconſcious of what I was doing, I took her hand, and her chariot door being opened by a pair of attendant cupids, ſhe inſtantly ſtepped in: "Permit me to ſet you down?" ſaid the ſoft ſyren; "you muſt not leave me ſo, *preux chevalier!* I have yet to evince my gratitude, my admiration!"—Her voice was tuned to the dulcet tones of love; ſhe preſſed my hand;—I was half reſolved to accept her invitation, when ſtooping forward, and whiſpering a deciſive challenge, her outward maſk fell off, and I diſcovered the Cytherean goddeſs to be no other than Lady Amaranth.

Terrified

Terrified and amazed, I made a precipitate retreat; and ſcrambling under the carriages, eſcaped the horrors that menaced me. At this moment a chairman was knocked down by the pole of a chariot; and I perceived two maſks, with three ſervants in richly laced liveries, lifting Miſs Woodford (who had fainted with the apprehenſion that her chairman was killed) into a *vis-a-vis*, near the ſcene of diſaſter. I darted towards her: one of the domeſtics, by order of his maſter, ſeized me by the collar. I ſtruck him;—he fell;—a crowd collected; and in the buſy interregnum, the *vis-a-vis* daſhed through the line of carriages with that dignified impetuoſity and refined inattention, which ſtoops not to regard the ſafety of a terrified multitude!

CHAP. L.

HAVING obtained information to whom the carriage belonged, I flew towards the manſion of the noble owner; and without heſitation demanded to ſpeak with Miſs Woodford. The ſervants denied knowing any ſuch perſon; and the man who had ſeized me by the collar inſtantly called the watch. I darted through the veſtibule, and abruptly entered a parlour, where I found Amelia in the moſt extreme agitation, attended by his Grace of Heartwing and Doctor Pimpernel. She flew towards me. "Oh, Walſingham!" ſaid ſhe, "how groſsly have I been inſulted!" The Duke would have wreſted her from my hold, but I whirled him from me, and he fell. The doctor aſſerted the purity of

of his intentions; and aſſumed the merit of having ſnatched Amelia from imminent danger: ſwore he had ſaved her life; and blamed my impetuoſity, which miſconſtrued the whole adventure.

I led Miſs Woodford along the hall, amidſt the inſolent ſneers and abuſive reproaches of the well-tutored domeſtics. That was not the moment to chaſtiſe impertinence, or to expoſe my precious charge to a new ſcene of danger. We haſtened into the ſtreet, dreſt as we were,—and were proceeding towards home, when two of the Duke's ſervants followed, and began to huſtle me. Miſs Woodford eſcaped and ran: I encountered my aſſailants, till the watch coming up, they thought fit to retreat. My rage and indignation were not to be deſcribed. I followed Amelia; and, to my infinite joy, found her ſafe with Mrs. Woodford.

Conſcious

Conſcious that the Duke would never forget my having counteracted his plan; and that the Doctor would be equally mindful of the wholeſome reproof of the preceding evening; I found that it required ſome ingenuity to evade the machinations which their malice would put in practice againſt me. Mrs. Woodford was overwhelmed with conſternation! She could not have thought that "a man of his Grace's rank would have acted ſo unworthily;" and ſhe never would have believed, "that a man ſo idolized by the women as the Doctor, would enter into a plot for the deſtruction of innocence:" but ſhe found, that experience itſelf might be deceived; and that one old woman has ſometimes not only the contrivance to outwit another; but the power to expoſe duplicity, and to lay open profligate deſigns to the deteſtation of every indignant obſerver.

Early

Early in the morning Miſs Woodford made a viſit to Mrs. O'Liffy: a fatal viſit! the reſult of which will appear hereafter. During their converſation Mrs. O'Liffy diſcovered a ſecret of no ſmall importance: nothing leſs than a plot framed by Doctor Pimpernel to apprehend me, from the deſcription of ſuch a perſon in the newſpapers; and to make the domeſtic, with whom I had the rencontre in Portland-place, the receiver of the reward, as a recompence for the blow which, in my own defence, I had inflicted. Miſs Woodford concealed her alarm from Mrs. O'Liffy, and haſtened home to appriſe me of my danger.

My conſternation was not more extreme than my reſentment. The plan appeared to me ſo daſtardly and vindictive, that I inſtantly wrote a challenge to the pupil of Eſculapius, demanding immediate ſatisfaction, and deſiring him to name

name the place and weapons. The note was diſpatched, and I waited with angry impatience till the meſſenger returned with a brief anſwer, that "the law ſhould very ſpeedily ſettle the buſineſs." Vexed, alarmed, and inſulted, in the fury of my diſappointment, I penned a letter to the Duke of Heartwing, informing him, that his conduct was not to be tolerated, and demanding that apology which ſhould alone ſatisfy my wounded honour. My epiſtle was broke open, read, and then returned by the inſolent ſervant, with the old verbal meſſage, that "his Grace knew no ſuch perſon."

Amelia conjured me to ſuſpend the hour of adjuſtment with my potent adverſaries, and to ſecure my own immediate ſafety. Mrs. Woodford was ſent for early in the morning to viſit Lady Kencarth, who was taken ſuddenly ill at her villa near Windſor, and, with an

aching heart, I took my leave of Amelia; once more deſtined to wander along the thorny path of hopeleſs affliction.

Previous to my departure I wrote a few lines to Mrs. Woodford, expreſſing my warm ſenſe of gratitude for her kindneſs; and promiſing that, as ſoon as Fortune ſhould favour me with the fainteſt ſmile, I would repay her generoſity, and return to thank her.

The weighty load of obligation, which Mrs. Woodford's liberal conduct had heaped upon my mind, augmented my ſufferings, and the manner in which I had been neceſſitated to quit her hoſpitable manſion, filled my breaſt with ſhame and compunction. Yet I had no alternative but diſgrace, miſery, and the loſs of character: for ſuch is the unfeeling deciſion of the world, that privation of liberty is deemed a ſtigma; while it is, in fact, the hard-dealing wretch who robs a fellow-creature of

that valuable birth-right, who is disgraced; and who deserves to have his name blotted for ever from the records of humanity. Indeed, it has too long been the scandal of a nation which prides itself on the reputation of benevolence, that a vindictive extortioner should have the power to tear a wretched but industrious sufferer from his helpless family, and, to gratify a malevolent, sordid revenge, deprive him of every hope, even of existence, under the sanction of the law, and with the plausible pretext of unsullied equity.

But I shall expose those causes and effects of ruin and persecution in a future chapter. Experience enables me to paint their plausibilities, and their capabilities, their glaring extortions and insolent menaces, with feeling and exactitude.

With a mind irritated by the arrogance of pride, and the mean evasion of duplicity,

city, I haſtened to obtain counſel and conſolation from my worthy friend Mr. Optic. I found him engaged with a bookſeller, and bargaining for Mr. M'Arthur's tragedy. The liberal diſpenſer of literature offered fifty guineas for that ſame compoſition which a brother of the trade had rated as low as five. His generous propoſal was accompanied by a promiſe to preſent the work to a relation, who was nearly connected with one of the London theatres, and to demand no ſhare whatever in the profits of the piece, except what might ariſe from the ſale of the copy. This fortunate event cheered the ſinking heart of the oppreſſed votary of Melpomene, who ſat with graceful diffidence in a corner of the room, while Mr. Optic performed the liberal taſk of friendſhip.

As ſoon as the bargain was concluded, I embraced the firſt moment to aſcer-

tain my former knowledge of Mr. M'Arthur, and, to my infinite aſtoniſhment, found that he was the ſame whom I had in my childhood met at Nice:—the generous diſintereſted friend of Mr. Hanbury; the liberal, honeſt preceptor of the profligate Lord Linbourne; the more than father of his early youth, the guardian of his fortune—though the unſucceſsful tutor of his mind and morals.

From Mr. M'Arthur I found that the Viſcount, as ſoon as he entered the world of ſplendour, in order to prove his friendſhip, had preſented his tutor with that old-faſhioned, but ineſtimable treaſure, an innocent and artleſs wife. The young and blooming bride was a diſtant relation of his lordſhip's, and great advantages, as well as much domeſtic felicity, ſeemed the probable reſult of their union. Four years they lived happily, though not ſplendidly. Mrs. M'Arthur was as lovely as ſhe was exemplary in

all the decorous arrangements of ſocial life: but the deluſive dream of happineſs was not eternal. The wily patron, by every artful ſtratagem, by every ſubtle machination of villany and fraud, pilfered the tutor's only treaſure; undermined the affections of his wife, ſeduced, abandoned, and conſigned her to irremediable ſorrow, affording the world a new ſubject for converſation, (the zeſt of paſſion being no longer excited by the buſy tongue of calumny,) by eloping with the lovely *protegée* of Lady Emily Delvin—the unfortunate Julie! Mrs. M'Arthur ſoon after died of a broken heart. Her huſband, having indignantly relinquiſhed the pecuniary emoluments ariſing from a ſituation obtained through the intereſt of his noble pupil, and being diſinherited by his father, a Scottiſh baronet, for adhering to the political tenets of the Viſcount, was ſhortly after conſigned to the

the gloomy horrors of a priſon. His principal creditor was an attorney, who had undertaken to ſue for a divorce, which death concluded before the law could pronounce its deciſion.

From that period, Mr. M'Arthur had ſtruggled againſt poverty and oppreſſion till his fortitude was exhauſted, and at laſt nearly overwhelmed; when one of his literary efforts falling into the hands of Mr. Optic, he diſcovered ſuch ſtrong *traits* of genius about it, that he reſolved never to reſt till he had made himſelf acquainted with the author. After many weeks of unremitting inquiry, he traced the neglected recluſe to that obſcure garret where I had found him, and where, on the third day of their acquaintance, an opportunity preſented itſelf for the diſplay of that philanthropy, which warmed and dignified the boſom of the liberal and humane Optic.

Reſolving to baniſh ſorrow, we paſſed a ſocial evening. Mr. Optic's ſpirits were exhilarated by the hope of Mr. M'Arthur's further ſucceſſes in the world of literature; and, by promiſing to write a prologue for his tragedy, he gave the dejected author every reaſon to anticipate a warm and brilliant reception from the public.

I fixed my reſting-place for that night at the houſe of Mr. Optic. The woe-exhauſted poet was already an inmate of the hoſpitable dwelling: the evening paſſed ſwiftly; and rational converſation, enlivened by wit, quieted the furious fever of my morning's ſenſations, till I almoſt forgot the injuries I had experienced.

CHAP. LI.

It was not till I laid my head upon my pillow that I began to reflect on my new embarraſſments. I ſlept but little, and my ſhort ſlumbers were broken by a thouſand viſionary evils, adding their appalling ſhadows to the dreadful realities of affliction. I roſe early, and again conſulted Mr. Optic: he adviſed me to remain patiently at his houſe until ſome deciſive intelligence ſhould reach me reſpecting my relations, or ſome opportunity preſent itſelf which might place me in the road to more proſperous fortune. This reſtriction was painful to my feelings, which were too ſtrongly awakened by curioſity to remain placid under the conviction that Iſabella was ſo near me. I reſolved to conceal myſelf during the day, but to employ the

early part of every night in a reſearch, which intereſted my heart far more than the dread of perſonal captivity.

Two days I vanquiſhed my propenſity, but on the third, at the duſk of the evening, I once more ſallied forth—not like the famed knight of La Mancha—not to diſplay my proweſs in vanquiſhing an harmleſs windmill—but in evading the terrific hoſts of that perpetually grinding law, which mixes the pure grain of oppreſſed honeſty with the coarſe chaff of fraud and villany; and, by inceſſant and indefatigable labour, ſets reaſon, humanity, and juſtice at defiance.

I had ſcarcely proceeded the length of a ſtreet towards the weſt end of the town, where I purpoſed making inquiries after the health of Miſs Woodford, when a thunder-ſtorm overtook me with ſuch rapidity, that every coach was called from the neareſt ſtand, and the rain pouring a deluge, I had no reſource left but

but that of taking ſhelter under a gateway. I was not the only ſtorm-driven refugee; the ſpot was thronged with pedeſtrians of various deſcriptions;—nymphs of the band-box, ſhivering beneath their ſhower-drenched habiliments; and venerable ſcouts, who are ever on the watch like the owls of twilight, and whoſe boſoms glow with phoſphoric flames, ſnatched from the downcaſt eyes of modeſt beauty.

Among the variety of motley figures whom pelting neceſſity had drawn together, I obſerved a couple deeply engaged in converſation. The man was placed in ſhadow, and the idol of his devotion was tricked out in all the finery of vulgar allurement. The inamorato vowed adoration to her beauty, and the nymph, after ſome feigned ſcruples, conſented that he ſhould attend her to her lodgings. The dialogue had amuſed the ſurrounding ſpectators: the

deſperate gallantry of the hero, and the artful capitulation of the heroine, concluded by his ſtopping a ſtray coach at that moment, like the adventurous knight, in queſt of a fair; and the amiable couple were juſt ſtepping into it when I diſcovered the features of my ſaint of the roſtrum, the conſcientious landlord of Clerkenwell. I could not let the delightful moment of retaliation eſcape me, but, whiſpering in his ear, "Now who canters down the broad road of perdition?" arreſted his erring ſteps, and he ſtaggered back to the gateway in evident conſternation.

But where was the ſpirit-chaſtened look; the puritanical tone of devout exhortation? Where the ruſty, ſhabby ſuit of ſables, emblem of the deep mourning of a contrite heart? Where the treſſes falling in lanky uniformity, and mocking the profane cuſtom of frizzing, pinching, ſcenting, and powdering?

dering?—Alas! they had all vaniſhed; while the little god of the twanging bow had decked the hypocritical apoſtate in a pair of neat half boots, a ſcanty, long backed, ſhort-ſkirted, narrow-collared, little great coat, which hung round his lean form like his grandmother's winter cardinal; to which faſhion had added a bludgeon two feet long, and a high-crowned hat, which would have concealed the features of Guy Vaux in his expedition, no leſs perilous than that which the arch impoſtor then meditated.

The only chance of eſcaping the diſgrace, which would attend his expoſure, ſeemed that of wholly denying his calling; but unluckily a ſecond ſpectator in the throng identifying his perſon, the ſhouts and hiſſes became univerſal. The multitude groaned in the ſpirit; but it was the ſpirit of indignation. The affrighted Camelion ſwore

and

and bluſtered, menaced me with his bludgeon, and at length, in the vehemence of his wrath, aimed a blow at my head. I returned it; a ring was inſtantly made, the metamorphoſed preacher of piety and peace ſtripped off his outward garb, and the onſet commenced with ſcientific preciſion.

A gentleman in the circle held the coat and waiſtcoat of my antagoniſt, and we had ſcarcely gone one round, when ſomething dropped from the pocket of the latter. The courage of the pugiliſtic champion at once deſerted him, and, without aſſigning any reaſon for giving in, he darted through the circle and ran; the mob ſhouting, and I laughing immoderately. In a few minutes I diſcovered that the object, which had ſtruck terror to the ſoul of the impoſtor, was nothing leſs than my own lamented pocket-book, purloined, in the ſcene of Mr. M'Arthur's diſtreſs,

by

by the meek partner of the perſecuting landlord. On opening the little treaſury, which when I loſt it contained no leſs than three hundred pounds, I found that only one hundred and fifty remained; the reſt having been laid out in decorating the honeſt pair for their *debut* in the circle of St. James's.

After requeſting the attendance of two witneſſes who had ſeen the pocket-book fall to the ground, we entered the hackney-coach, which was ſtill in waiting, and haſtened to the houſe of the impoſtor. But he had decamped early on the preceding morning, after ſelling his goods and chattels to an appraiſer, and humanely turning Mademoiſelle de Beaumont into the ſtreet, to ſeek for ſhelter in the abode of ſome more benevolent protector.

We now repaired to Mr. Optic's, and very fortunately he corroborated my teſtimony reſpecting the pocket-book, having

having ſeen it on my table while I reſided at Mrs. Woodford's. The lock was remarkable, being engraved with Iſabella's initials, and the motto *gage d'amitie* enamelled round them: it was a gift of friendſhip beſtowed by Miſs Hanbury, and far more valuable to me than all the treaſure it could ever encompaſs.

Once more in poſſeſſion of a ſmall ſum, I haſtened to Mrs. Woodford's, in the hope of finding her, and of repaying my pecuniary obligation: but my diſappointment was infinite, when the ſervant informed me that ſhe ſtill remained with Lady Kencarth; and that Miſs Woodford had that evening ſet out to join them, intending to paſs a few days with her ſick relation. My good fortune was ſtill darkened by the gloom of regret, while I reflected on the evils that might again aſſail Mademoiſelle de Beaumont: and fate ſeemed to whiſper, that there

was

was no proſpect of repoſe for me, while there exiſted one wretched being in the whole circle of my acquaintance.

Mr. Optic being abſent from home on my return to his houſe, I employed a vacant hour in collecting, and thus arranging my ſentiments on the ſubject.

In this vain, buſy world, where the good and the gay,
By affliction and folly wing moments away:
Where the falſe are reſpected, the virtuous betray'd,
Where vice lives in ſunſhine, and genius in ſhade;
With a ſoul-ſicken'd ſadneſs all changes I ſee,
For the world, the baſe world, has no pleaſure for me.

In cities, where wealth loads the coffers of pride;
Where talents and ſorrow are ever ally'd;
Where dulneſs is worſhip'd, and wiſdom deſpis'd;
Where none but the empty and venal are priz'd:
All ſcenes, with diſguſt and abhorrence I ſee,
For the world has no corner of comfort for me!

While pale Aſiatics, encircled with gold,
The ſons of misfortune indignant behold,
While the tithe-pamper'd churchman reviles at the poor,
As the 'lorn ſinking traveller faints at his door;
While religion dares ſanction oppreſſion's decree,
O! keep ſuch hard boſoms, ſuch monſters from me!

While

While the flame of a patriot expires in the breaſt,
With ribbands and tinſel, and frippery dreſt;
While the proud mock the children of want and of care;
Give a ſneer for each ſigh, and a ſmile for each pray'r:
Though they triumph a day—a ſhort day it muſt be:
Heaven keep ſuch cold tyrants, O! keep them from me.

While the lawyer ſtill lives by the anguiſh of hearts;
While he wrings the wrong'd boſom, and thrives as it ſmarts;
While he graſps the laſt guinea from poverty's heir;
While he revels in ſplendour which roſe from deſpair;
While the tricks of his office our ſcourges muſt be,
Ah! keep the ſhrewd knave, and his quibbles from me.

O! Earth! thou vile Earth! how I tremble to trace
The anguiſh that hourly augments for thy race!
How I turn from the worſt while I honour the beſt;
The enlighten'd adore; and the venal deteſt:
And alas! with what joy to the grave would I flee,
Since the world, the baſe world! has no pleaſure for me!

CHAP. LII.

Two days had paſſed, when Mrs. Woodford and her daughter returned to town; I paid them a viſit immediately on their arrival, and requeſted permiſſion to arrange my pecuniary obligations: but Mrs. Woodford would not hear me mention the ſubject. She expreſſed herſelf as ſufficiently gratified in having been of ſervice to me; and commanded, if I valued her friendſhip, an eternal ſilence on the ſubject in future.

Amelia evidently laboured under an unconquerable depreſſion of ſpirits; her cheek was pale, and her countenance the melancholy index of a mind heavily charged with affliction. Mrs. Woodford only quitted the room for a few minutes, during the evening; but thoſe few

few afforded Amelia an opportunity of diſcloſing a world of anticipated ſorrow. "Walſingham!" ſaid ſhe, with a quivering lip, and eyes ſuffuſed with tears, "in another week I ſhall be obliged to relinquiſh every hope of happineſs—I ſhall be the wife of——" Here ſhe ſuddenly pauſed: "but," continued ſhe, after a conflict of a few moments, "you muſt not witneſs my ſacrifice; you muſt not behold the agony it will inflict, on a heart that would not be able to ſuſtain the trial. I conjure you to ſee me no more. There are reaſons which will render your abſence neceſſary to my future peace of mind. I have this day received a letter, which decides my fate, and renders you the only being upon earth, from whom I muſt ſeparate for ever!"

"Muſt ſeparate!" repeated I; "who ſhall compel you?"

"Reaſon,

"Reaſon, honour, gratitude, unite to command your abſence," replied Miſs Woodford. The word gratitude ſtung my pride, and I briefly anſwered, "Your commands ſhall be obeyed."

"Oh God!" exclaimed Amelia," "what a moment is this? How ſhall I fulfil thoſe ſolemn vows which cuſtom and religion will compel me to make; but which my truant heart will every moment ſhrink from? Shall I, ſo attached, ſo compelled, be culpable, if I kneel at the altar with a boſom conſcious of falſehood; and half reſolved to hate the very object whom I there promiſe to love, to honour?"

I knew not how to anſwer her. Beautiful and intereſting as ſhe appeared at that moment, I could not offer her an honourable union; and I ſhuddered at the idea of deſtroying a gentle, faſcinated girl, whoſe merit as far ſurpaſſed my pretenſions, as her beauty did that of every

every other woman,—excepting Iſabella. After waiting ſome time, and finding me ſilent, ſhe continued: "The idol to whom you devote your thoughts, for whom you paſs a life of weary anguiſh, is already married."

"Married! Almighty God! Is Iſabella married?" exclaimed I, with a voice of frantic deſpair.

"Pardon me, unhappy Walſingham," continued Miſs Woodford, "if I am the unwelcome meſſenger of the fatal ſecret; but the object of your attention at Mrs. Heartwell's, is the wife of Sir Sidney Aubrey. I have been indefatigable in my inquiries, and the reſult of them is the dreadful confirmation of your deſpair. Think of her no more."

"Not think of her!" cried I, in an agony of frenzy; "I will think of her, and I will ſee her: ſhe ſhall not triumph; her lover, her ſeducer, her——Oh! perdition ſeize the word! her *huſband*, ſhall

ſhall not poſſeſs her long! Never, never will I reſt till I have found them! While I had hope, there was yet a dawn of happineſs in ſtore for me: but the fiat of deſpair is concluſive, and one of us ſhall periſh."

"You will not find her," ſaid Amelia; "whither would you ſeek her?"

"Whither? In all her haunts of diſſipation," ſaid I; "at every place of public entertainment. The crowds of cities and the ſolitudes of mountains ſhall be explored. Oh, Amelia! you know not how I loved her! how I doted on this vain, capricious, barbarous Iſabella!" Mrs. Woodford interrupted the converſation, and in a few minutes I departed in a fever of mind little ſhort of madneſs.

On the following morning I hired a lodging in Pall Mall;—I had been told that it was the faſhionable reſort of every morning lounger, who wiſhed either to

ſee

ſee or to be ſeen in the buſy rendezvous of notoriety. It was my morning taſk to watch at my window; my evening occupation was that of traverſing the ſtreets, with the hope of ſeeing Sir Sidney's carriage waiting to convey them to ſome place of public amuſement. Three days paſſed, and I was ſtill unſucceſsful;—but the fourth!—Oh, Roſanna! how ſhall I tranſcribe the page of cureleſs miſery, which time has engraved upon my heart in characters indelible? How ſhall I unfold the events of that fatal period, in which I abjured every hope of happineſs; every gleam of future conſolation?

A ſecond maſquerade was announced at the Opera-houſe. The recollection that I had ſeen Iſabella at Mrs. Heartwell's made me determine on going, in hopes that I ſhould again meet the woman who was now almoſt an object of abhorrence, and more than ever the

ſource of an hopeleſs attachment. Again a diſguiſe was provided, and again I flew to the ſcene of folly and intrigue, armed with reſentment, and impatient for an opportunity to vent the indignation of my full heart. There again I found the ſame phalanx of reſtleſs ſpirits that never ceaſe to wander in the haunts of diſſipation. Every one ſeemed dying with *ennui*, and no one either tried to amuſe, or wiſhed to be amuſed: languor, univerſal languor, pervaded the ſcene, excepting only here and there a buſy couple arranging plans for future diſgrace, and uttering ill-natured truths, under the ſpecious diſguiſe of wit or admonition. Many a fair ſylph, who had recently been initiated in the myſtic rites of the higher regions, here made her *debut* in the mazes of deception, or the flowery paths of modern gallantry, till the feſtoons of coloured lamps glimmered their laſt rays, and the morning came,

to diſcover the weary group half aſleep, half dreſſed, half dirty, and more than half diſſatisfied with their night's entertainment.

On entering the crowd, I fancied that I ſaw and heard, at leaſt, a dozen Iſabellas. Every pretty figure, every ſoft voice, ſeemed to mark the object of my ſearch. At length a female paſſed me, and with more than ordinary attention darted the luſtre of her blue piercing eyes through the black ſcreen which concealed every other feature. I ſtopped ſhort; ſhe turned round, and courteouſly kiſſed her hand. A female friend accompanied her; I followed them; attempted to enter into converſation; but the beautiful *incognita* was dumb;—not a word would ſhe utter; and I began at laſt to grow impatient.

She ſeated herſelf at the ſupper table; whiſpered and laughed with her companion; offered me a glaſs of iced fruit, and

and again whiſpered. I now obſerved a maſk who ſeated himſelf by her ſide, and by his addreſs knew him to be Doctor Pimperne[.] "Divine creature!" ſaid he, "how celeſtially you look! I have been ſearching after you this half hour. My noble friend Lord Kencarth wants to preſent a young ſtranger to you; a fellow that is dying by G—d: he has watched you all the night, and wants to know who the maſk was that perſecuted you before ſupper?" The lady whiſpered. The doctor inſtantly fixed his eyes on me with inquiſitive rudeneſs. I ſat perfectly ſtill, gratifying his curioſity, and ſecretly cheriſhing a new ſource of indignation, when two black dominos bowed to the fair unknown. The doctor roſe, and with obſequious attention gave his place to one of them; while the other came round the table, and took his ſeat next to me.

He gazed at me with an earneſt and unceaſing inquietude; and by his evidently reſtleſs manner, I concluded that he wiſhed to quarrel. This intercourſe of menacing looks continued for ſome time, when the ſtranger, in a feigned voice, addreſſed me.

"Why," ſaid he, "why do you follow that lady?"

"Becauſe it amuſes me," anſwered I.

"Is ſhe your miſtreſs?"

I made no reply.

"Is ſhe the woman of your heart?" ſaid the inquiſitive maſk.

"She was—once, I believe," anſwered I, with ſome heſitation.

"You believe!" repeated the inquirer; "are you not certain?"

"Not quite," ſaid I; "but if you know the lady, you can place the ſurmiſe beyond a doubt."

"Ridicu-

"Ridiculous!" cried the maſk. "What right have you to perſecute a ſtranger, upon mere ſurmiſe?"

"The right which you aſſume when you aſk the queſtion," ſaid I. "But as I am not more diſpoſed to liſten to impertinence, than you are to ceaſe offending, I think the moſt deciſive way of ſettling the buſineſs, is for both of us to unmaſk." At this inſtant I ſnatched the diſguiſe from my face; the ſtranger was on the point of following my example, when he ſtarted back and ſunk upon the bench behind him. Still he kept his maſk on, and conjecture was more bewildered than ever; I knew that decorum would not admit of my touching it; and yet it was impoſſible for me to let the affair reſt in doubt; or for the offender to eſcape with impunity, after his impertinent interference.

The lady who had excited my curioſity and the jealouſy of my unknown inquiſitor, now roſe to mingle with the dancers. The black domino and Doctor Pimpernel accompanied her; I ſtarted from my ſeat, and followed them. The doctor would have huſtled me, but I ſtill perſevered—Again my arm was checked, and a voice which ſeemed familiar to me exclaimed—"By Heavens, Walſingham! you ſhall not follow her."

I turned ſuddenly round, and the ſtranger unmaſking, I diſcovered that it was my perſecuting antagoniſt Sir Sidney Aubrey.

He ſtretched forth his hand with the moſt eager cordiality, accompanied by a ſmile, which ſeemed an additional inſult.—My ſenſations were undeſcribable—Smarting with the keeneſt ſenſe of injury, deceived, deſerted, neglected, and robbed of every hope, I turned with diſ-

guſt

guſt from a reconciliation which would have diſgraced me, and left Sir Sidney the victorious huſband of Iſabella.—The idea was diſtracting—inſupportable! I would have departed without making any anſwer to my couſin's ſtrange injunction;—I wiſhed not to ſeek a quarrel—I ſhuddered at the thought of ſhedding his blood, even though he had tortured my heart with the moſt inhuman perſecutions. I pauſed—I ſtruggled with the conflicts of my ſoul.

Sir Sidney's countenance was provokingly chearful.—"I am glad that we meet once more," ſaid he; "for I have an infinite page of time to unfold—full of events, and intereſting to us both."

Impertinent as I deemed his mirth, I ſtill had ſufficient command of myſelf to forbear offering him any inſult. I was reſolved not to ſacrifice my life for an ungrateful woman—a deeper, ſweeter

vengeance occupied my mind;—vengeance, which I believed would render all the events of future days wholly indifferent. Had Sir Sidney annihilated me on the firſt hour that he entertained a paſſion for Iſabella, there would have been a degree of mercy to grace his triumph: but he conſigned my lacerated breaſt to months of lingering torture!—darkened my hopes of fame, my paths to fortune!—and, by his fatal machinations, undermined every affection of the heart, every ſource of peace and reputation!

I was again endeavouring to quit the theatre, when Sir Sidney caught my arm and exclaimed—"Gracious God! have you forgot me, Walſingham?"

"Would to heaven I had!" replied I, endeavouring to break from him.—"Let go my arm, Sir Sidney; do not propel my thoughts to miſchief; there

is danger in thus irritating an unquiet ſpirit; avoid it, if you value your exiſtence."

"How idly you talk, Walſingham," cried Sir Sidney; "how little do you know my motives for that, which you deem perſecution! You have ſenſe, diſcernment, feeling!—you have faculties of mind that ſhould place it above prejudice."

I endeavoured to break from him: "By the immortal Powers, Sir Sidney!" exclaimed I, maddening with rage, "this inſolence is not to be endured! This perpetual, this untiring tyranny will rouſe me to reſiſtance; and one of us will be the victim. Beware, I charge you to beware, how you provoke my vengeance! I have been long enough the ſlave of your determined cruelty;—the hour of retribution is at hand, and may the protection of Hea-

ven forſake me if I do not well employ it."

"Bravo!" cried Sir Sidney, giving me a ſmart tap upon the ſhoulder; "out with your rage!—let the ſtorm have vent, and then we will talk reaſonably."

I ſmothered my frenzy, for I was little leſs than frantic—We returned to a table which was entirely deſerted. Sir Sidney called for a bottle of champaign; I had already drunk too much, my blood was fevered, my brain burning with agony, my heart throbbing with reſentment.

"Why, what a ſilly, hot-headed fellow art thou, my good couſin!" cried Sir Sidney, filling my glaſs, and laughing with provoking jocularity. "Where have you been ſince I ſaw you laſt?—in what corner of this great chaos of folly and diſſipation have you concealed yourſelf, to cheriſh reſentment, and to overwhelm your reaſon?"

"Before

"Before you aſk the queſtion," ſaid I, "tell *me*, Sir Sidney, why you have robbed me of repoſe?—why you ſeduced the affections of Iſabella?—why you now ſet the world's opinion at defiance, and thus publicly expoſe the infamy of your triumph?"

"Becauſe it pleaſes me," replied Sir Sidney, with cool and irritating indifference. "Iſabella is a pleaſant girl, who wiſhes to travel; I am a ſocial being, and want a companion."

"And I a tame, diſgraced, and abject fool!" ſaid I, "to bear the inſults that you every moment heap upon me!—Hear me, Sir Sidney.—You have from your earlieſt childhood been the bane of my repoſe; you have treated me unworthily, inhumanly! Every wiſh of my heart has been croſſed and counteracted by your barbarous machinations. Born to ſupplant me, you have fully anſwered all the purpoſes of fate, and your ran-

rancour will never terminate till one of us ſhall fall. I ſpeak not from the impulſe of the moment: I have long ruminated on the tenor of your conduct; and deſpiſed myſelf for the baſeneſs of ſubmiſſion. Had you not been created, I had been happy. The hour which gave you birth ſealed my deſtiny with ſorrow. Can I eſteem, can I love the author of my miſery? Have I, through the long and tedious path of life, cheriſhed one hope, attached myſelf to one dear object, of which you have not deprived me? Aſk your heart, and tell me the reſult of its confeſſion."

Sir Sidney ſeemed loſt in thought.—I ſwallowed a large draught of intoxicating liquor—and waited with infinite ſelf-conſtraint for my couſin's anſwer.—He was ſilent, and I again addreſſed him—

"You have not even the ſlighteſt plea for your duplicity. I read the

tacit

tacit confeſſion of your ſoul in your involuntary ſilence! Why then ſting my breaſt with perpetual ſcorpions?—why hunt me like a weary panting victim, and enjoy the agonies with which you wring my boſom in proportion as they become inſupportable? It is my misfortune, my curſe, to love Iſabella!—yes, to love her amidſt all her indiſcretions, to pity the weakneſs of her nature, and to lament the capricious conduct which any being leſs devoted than myſelf would execrate."

"Sir Sidney's colour changed—he bit his lip—with a trembling hand raiſed the glaſs towards it, again placing it on the table—reſted his head againſt a pillar near his ſeat, and ſeemed overpowered with agitation. He roſe to leave me, but he had not ſtrength to accompliſh his purpoſe. The big drops ſtarted from his forehead—I fancied that his eyes were glazed with tears—he inſtantly concealed

concealed them. After an agonizing ſtruggle, with quivering lips and a tone of inarticulate ſorrow, he replied—

"Iſabella is my friend—"

"Your miſtreſs!" interrupted I.

"No! by the ſacred powers of truth—by all that is dear to honour! ſhe *is* not, ſhe never *ſhall be* my miſtreſs:—I love Iſabella too well to ſee her degraded, even were it poſſible that ſhe could conſider me as a lover."

"You know, Sir Sidney, that your vanity has long ſince told you Iſabella would be, nay is, vain of ſuch a lover."

"How little do you know her!" cried Sir Sidney, with a forced and melancholy ſmile; "ſhe loves me as a friend,—no more. We are united by the ſacred bonds of ſympathy—no mortal interference ever ſhall divide us: my honour will ſtill be her ſafeguard—ſhe is as innocent as an angel."

"Then

"Then reſign her to me," ſaid I—"reſtore the peace of mind, of which you deprived me, when you robbed me of Iſabella's ſociety. Be generous; be the character you aſſume—trifle no longer with my happineſs, my exiſtence, but give me Iſabella."

"Never!" replied Sir Sidney. "I will willingly expire! but never while you breathe, Walſingham, ſhall you be the huſband of Miſs Hanbury. She has ſworn to me, ſhe has engaged herſelf by every ſacred ſolemn oath, never to become your wife."

"Barbarous, vindictive, vile, inſulting coward!" ſaid I.

Sir Sidney ſtarted from his ſeat. His face reddened to the deepeſt ſcarlet; then as ſuddenly became pale and diſtorted. "Walſingham," ſaid he, ſtifling his indignation, "do not diſgrace me—do not ſtamp my name with infamy, or urge me on to my own eternal

ruin. I was not organized to bear with paſſive ſubmiſſion ſuch repeated inſults. A time will come when your raſh heart will ache at the recollection of your folly—mine will then be tranquil!"

"Let us decide the buſineſs quickly," ſaid I, following him from the table—"You muſt relinquiſh Iſabella, or meet me to ſettle the diſpute to-morrow."

"Then I *will* meet you," replied Sir Sidney; "for I would readily prefer death to the idea of beholding Miſs Hanbury your wife. Raſh and ungrateful Walſingham! you ſhall find me at the cloſe of to-morrow evening near the river in Hyde-Park; from thence we can adjourn to ſome convenient ſpot, and end the conteſt finally: only remember, that *my* reſolution is already fixed—*my* fate determined. Your future days will be devoted to miſery, repentance, and deſpair!"

I ſmiled

I ſmiled at the implied menace, and we inſtantly parted.

At this moment again a tall and beautiful figure, dreſſed in a black gauze robe ſpangled with ſilver, darted by me. I followed her.—I caught her hand—I preſſed it—ſhe did not reprove the daring experiment.—I whiſpered, "Oh, Iſabella! ſpeak to me now, for to-morrow we ſhall part for ever!"

She ſhook her head and ſighed. I held her hand—it trembled; ſhe looked round, as if to join her company, and then entered the ſupper-room, which was empty. "Grant me yet a moment," ſaid I; "one little moment will not contaminate your love—my rival would not, at ſuch a criſis, refuſe ſo ſmall a gleam of conſolation."

She ſeemed afflicted, but ſhe remained maſked, and ſilent. I preſſed her hand to my parched lips; ſhe gently tried to withdraw it, but it was a feeble effort; my tortured

tortured heart interpreted her want of power to ſenſibility,—dare I confeſs?—to ſomething tenderer than pity! I was mad with tranſport. The ſudden change from agony to joy poſſeſſed my faculties.—"Bleſſed Iſabella!" ſaid I, "deareſt and moſt adored of women! it is the loſt, diſtracted Walſingham that thanks thee even for this dawn of pity! withdraw it not! Perhaps it is deſtined to gleam upon my grave!"

She ſhuddered; I continued—

"Do you love Sir Sidney Aubrey? Tell me, Iſabella; let me not expire in the dreadful uncertainty of that which bows me to deſtruction."

She again ſhook her head. I no longer recollected our ſituation——the world was indifferent to me; I ſnatched her to my boſom—ſhe threw me from her. I fell at her feet—"Forgive me, angel, Iſabella! I am not in my ſenſes—

I ſhall

I ſhall offend no more. Soon, very ſoon, this aching heart will be cold and ſenſeleſs!"

She turned ſuddenly from me, and flew towards the ſaloon: I followed till ſhe reached the portico. She ſeemed bewildered, as though ſhe had loſt her party; a hackney coach at that moment drawing up, the door was opened, when, ſcarcely knowing what I did, I caught her in my arms, and, placing her by my ſide, ordered the coachman to drive on: he inſtantly obeyed. Overwhelmed with terror, and (forgive me, Roſanna, if I ſay) ſubdued by affection, ſhe ſunk upon my breaſt, and fainted.

My alarm was terrible: I concluded that, in the violence of my frenzy, I had ſtruck her head againſt the carriage. I ſtopped the coachman, and bid him haſten to my lodgings in Pall-Mall. The door was opened by my ſervant. I informed him that the lady had

had fainted coming out of the Opera-Houſe; he helped me to ſupport her to the drawing-room, and, after bringing a glaſs of water, left us.

The inordinate quantity of wine which in my rage and vexation I had ſwallowed, ſoon took poſſeſſion of my brain. I knew not where I was; the image of Iſabella ſtill predominated, while indignation and revenge occupied the throne of reaſon! I fetched the light which my ſervant had left upon the table to ſee whether her features began to reanimate: my limbs were unſteady—I reeled—the candleſtick fell from my hand; while the fainteſt dawn of day entered between the ſhutters. I fell at the feet of my beautiful *incognita*. —She wept, and ſighed; ſhe hid her face upon my ſhoulder. The time, the place, the potency of the fatal draughts which I had ſwallowed, conſpired to madden me! all the claims

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of unprotected innocence, all the laws of honour were violated—and—I was a villain!

CHAP. LIII.

THE ſun roſe; the buſy world began to recommence its varying ſcenes of labour, and I, no longer yielding every ſenſe to the ſtupor of intoxication, awoke to reaſon, to reflection, to abhorrence of myſelf. But, oh Heavens! Roſanna! what horrors undeſcribable ſeized on all my faculties! what miſery, what deſpair preſented themſelves to my mind, when, almoſt driven to frenzy, and bathed in floods of tears, I beheld, —not Iſabella—but the unfortunate Amelia!

My

My anguiſh was complete! The only plea to palliate my crime, was retaliation for the capricious Iſabella's conduct, and Sir Sidney's barbarous exultations.—That ſhadow of extenuation was now vaniſhed. I had been the dupe of my own impetuous paſſions; the deſtruction of a weak, credulous, fond girl, whom I did not, could not love, but to whom I owed ineſtimable obligations.—Thus, adding to the miſery of diſhonour the ſtings of the moſt ſhameleſs ingratitude; at once a baſe and deſpicable fool, and a daring unprincipled libertine. I had been raſh, imprudent, and unfortunate; but till this diſaſtrous hour I had never been diſhonourable. The tears, the complaints, the tender ſorrows of my victim, only augmented my regret, without touching my ſenſibility. I was too wretched to know pity, too diſtracted to feel the throb of commiſeration.

tion. All the ſenſations of my heart were abſorbed in one vaſt and undeſcribable affliction; and the only idea that ſucceeded the firſt paroxyſm of deſpair, was that of vengeance, deciſive vengeance, on the arrogant Sir Sidney.

My ſituation was terrible! I knew of no aſylum where I could ſhelter Amelia from the ills that threatened her; and to preſent her to the world as my avowed miſtreſs would have been raſhly, finally ruinous to her reputation. She avowed her determination never to return to that home which ſhe had deſerted; though the recollection of what her mother's mind would ſuffer, while labouring under the conflicts of ſuſpence and doubt, preſented more dreadful tortures than even the conſciouſneſs of her own deſtruction. She had from that fatal hour to ſolicit protection among ſtrangers, or to try the painful experiment of ſeeking the balm of conſolation from a ſmiling herd of ſpecious

ſummer

ſummer friends, who baſk in the ſunſhine of adverſity, and, like the emigrating bird, fly at the approach of cold and chearleſs ſorrow. The taſk which I had to perform, the difficult taſk of preſerving a name from contempt which was ſullied by indiſcretion, puzzled and perplexed me, even if I ſurvived the rencontre with Sir Sidney; and the idea of leaving her to the mercy of a ſternly judging world, almoſt bewildered me to madneſs.

In the moment of calamity I had no alternative but that of placing Miſs Woodford in a lodging near the metropolis; we inſtantly ſet out, and hired apartments at Kenſington: ſhe took poſſeſſion of them the ſame evening as my ſiſter, with the aſſumed name of Montagu. I returned to town to meet Sir Sidney—You will judge of my ſituation—quitting an amiable object, who was the victim of her own ſuſceptibility, yet whom

whom I could not love; ſo lately ſubdued, and ſo ſoon deſerted:—my conflicts were dreadful. I wiſhed not to eſcape Sir Sidney's reſentment; I had no proſpect ſo ſweet, ſo ſoothing, as that of death. To what miſery, what terrible extremes, will our ungovernable paſſions lead us!

I waited in Hyde Park more than an hour; twilight cloſed, and I ſaw nothing of Sir Sidney. At a loſs to comprehend the meaning of his abſence, for I did not conſider cowardice as one of his imperfections, I continued to ſtroll up and down the footpath till night came on, when a little boy paſſed and repaſſed me with looks of doubt and curioſity. I inquired of him whether he had any meſſage for me: he preſented a letter, which he ſaid a lady had given him near the Park gate in Piccadilly. I rewarded him for his trouble, and haſtened to the turnpike, where I

ſtopped to examine it. It contained the following words:

"Raſh and unthinking Walſingham!
"—You know not what you meditate:
"Sir Sidney *ſhall not* meet you; a life
"ſo *precious* muſt not be ſacrificed to
"a mad and perſevering revenge,
"founded on miſtaken principles of
"honour. Wait, I conjure you, wait
"with patience; and time will un-
"ravel the ſpell that now retards your
"proſpects.

"ISABELLA."

I read the letter ſeveral times before I could believe my ſenſes. I knew it to be the writing of Miſs Hanbury, and I conſtrued its contents a thouſand different ways.—I haſtened to Kenſington. Amelia was in tears when I entered the apartment: I knew not what to ſay; hating myſelf for the thought of diſſembling, and regarding her repoſe too tenderly

tenderly to hazard a diſcloſure of my real ſituation. I remained with her till near midnight, tortured by compunction, and yet not daring to mortify her pride, by pleading intoxication as the cauſe of her diſhonour; for to know that ſhe was miſtaken for another—that my frantic imagination preſented the idea of Iſabella at a time when reaſon was ſubſervient to the frenzy of the moment—left her no hope of honourable retribution, no proſpect of attachment, no ray of conſolation.

I found upon inquiry, that Miſs Woodford's viſit to Mrs. O'Liffy, on the morning after the firſt maſquerade, was prompted by curioſity to inquire the dreſs which was worn by the female who accompanied the Welſh baronet. Propelled by that undefinable impulſe which ſome call fate, ſhe reſolved on aſſuming a ſimilar diſguiſe; in order to watch my actions, and if poſſible, un-

der the outward form of Iſabella, to obtain a full confeſſion of my moſt ſecret wiſhes. Fatal was the reſult of her curioſity!—not only the ruin of her own reputation, but the eternal miſery of a being fondly attached to her, and, by the moſt ineſtimable qualities of mind, deſerving of a prouder deſtiny.

Miſs Woodford ſcarcely ſpoke to me during the evening; the ſtupor of grief almoſt deprived her of the power of utterance. She frequently murmured her mother's name, and never without a torrent of tears, which at length ſoftened my heart to ſympathy and compunction; for I reflected, that the amiable object before me, in a few days, would have been the partner of an honourable union—the pride and ornament of domeſtic tranquillity.

The miſtreſs of the houſe promiſed to ſhew Miſs Woodford every attention. I preſented her as an invalid; her

her pale countenance, her languid eyes, and her dejected looks, fully authorized the deſcription. Every gentle reproof, every timid, yet mournful word ſhe uttered, pierced my heart with ſelf-reproach: yet even the diſgrace, which her childiſh curioſity had brought upon her, did not ſo keenly agonize my breaſt, as the dreadful, the fatal neceſſity for that diſſimulation which could alone preſerve her from frenzy. For though I had deſtroyed the luſtre of her days, I had no right to ſhorten them; though my paſſions had maſtered my reaſon, they were not to ſubdue the claims of humanity.

Returned to London, after promiſing Amelia that ſhe ſhould ſee me early the following day, I haſtened to my friend Optic, and without diſguiſe unfolded the horrors of my ſituation. He ſhuddered:—the nice, the genuine ſenſibility of his mind, anticipated the vaſt

variety of ills that would inevitable accrue from my frantic precipitation. "You muſt marry Amelia," ſaid he; "you muſt reſtore her to ſociety, and thereby make her an honourable recompence for the preſent moment of deſpair."

"Impoſſible!" ſaid I.

"Seal not her deſtiny by any raſh determination," cried Mr. Optic. "Only I conjure you to reflect, that, in a few hours, the tongue of calumny may blaſt a name which you are bound to defend. The fondneſs and maternal ambition of Mrs. Woodford, the reſpectability of her connections, Amelia's blameleſs manners, and the cenſure of every honourable mind, will riſe up in arms againſt you; and you will find no generous, manly heart, that will not condemn your conduct. For my own part," continued he, with a ſeverity of tone unlike any thing that I had heard

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in our former converſations, "I muſt, as the friend of Amelia Woodford, decidedly reprobate that levity, which, while it gratifies the paſſion of a libertine, deſtroys the repoſe of unprotected innocence. I am no cynic; but the plan which you have adopted ſets all toleration at defiance."

With this ſtern reproof he left me, more wretched and more at a loſs how to act than I was even before I had requeſted his counſel on the ſubject.

Mr. Optic had ſcarcely quitted the room three minutes, when Doctor Pimpernel entered. He ſeemed diſconcerted at ſeeing me, and I was no leſs confuſed at meeting the perſon from whoſe power I had ſo recently reſcued the very woman whom I had ſince robbed of peace and reputation. The doctor ſoon releaſed me from my embarraſſment by vociferating—"My noble fellow! what induced you to write

me ſuch an abſurd letter?—The poor little huſſey was in better hands than ſhe probably now is: for I ſuppoſe you have heard that ſhe eloped laſt night from the Opera-houſe with nobody knows whom!—All the world talks of it, and the old woman is little leſs than mad;—mad by the immortal gods! as mad as——But no matter; the whole human race is more or leſs inſane, and one old woman, in the great ſcale of events, is of little importance."

"I am heartily ſorry to hear that the world is ſo buſily employed in propagating ſcandal," ſaid I; "but I am ſtill more ſincerely grieved, that there is occaſion for their induſtry in the preſent inſtance."

My voice faultered, and my mind was agonized to a degree that was ſcarcely ſupportable.

"She was a fool to elope," continued the doctor. "A few days would

would have given her full liberty to indulge her propenſities, without the peril of public diſgrace; for, if I am rightly informed, the little blockhead was to have been married. The old duke, and half a dozen more on the liſt of her inamoratos, waited impatiently for the event.—Well."

"Do you ſuppoſe that an intrigue would have followed an honourable union with ſuch rapidity?" ſaid I.

"Unqueſtionably," replied the doctor. "Amelia was too highly bred not to aſſert her claim to a diploma in the temple of gallantry. She has killed long enough; it is time that ſhe ſhould begin to cure. *Apropos*—I have been calling on half the divine creatures at the weſt end of the town; nothing talked of but the elopement. I looked in upon the Ducheſs of Riversford;—ſhe, knowing the caſe to be natural, was not at all ſurpriſed at it. Lady

Ethiop wondered how a man could be ſuch a fool as to elope with ſuch a young hoyden; Mrs. Winkwell ſtared more than uſual; Lady Fubſy bluſhed deep purple at the profligacy of the riſing generation; Miſs Caſino giggled; and Lady Amaranth was the only woman in the circle who did not change countenance."

Poor Amelia! thought I, theſe were thy friends, thy aſſociates. Where ſhall I hide thee from their barbarous triumphs? — My mind was wrapt in thought, when the doctor continued:— "I muſt go and tell the old duke; his joy will be exceſſive. The ſaucy baggage has long reſiſted his ſolicitations; even a *carte blanche*, and the villa at Hampton, could not tempt her: but the frozen heart once thawed, the broad ſun of reaſon will ſoon expand its philanthropy. Well—I muſt make a memorandum to call on Doleful—got him a ſub-

a ſubſcriber—but he muſt immortalize my name for it; or the ſlave ſhall be blotted from the liſt of Heaven's own nobility. Poor Dole! he is but a block-head after all;—he too is going to do a fooliſh thing, and to marry, becauſe a little jade has fallen in love with him. Never, my noble Montagu! never, while you live, think of that enemy to univerſal liberty—that d—d deſpot Hymen! He has ſhackled more fools than all the tyrants in Chriſtendom. But univerſal freedom is dawning on the ſphere of human underſtanding, and man will fly, even to the very ſtars. Were you at the maſquerade laſt night?"

"I was," anſwered I.

"What an aſſemblage of beauty!" exclaimed the doctor. "I thought that I was in Mahomet's paradiſe!—Went home and ſupped with the pretty jade Amoret, and her comical friend Mrs. O'Liffy. Both confoundedly ancient!

Well—no matter—drank tokay and claret out of the firſt cellar in town!—delicious—ſublime—fit for the gods!—Where were you? I wanted to introduce you to little Amoret."

"Was it Miſs Amoret to whom you were talking at the ſupper-table?" ſaid I.

The doctor rubbed his forehead. "O no, no," anſwered he, after a moment's recollection, "that was Mrs. Winkwell: ſhe hopped off with my noble friend Kencarth;—preſented him to her for the firſt time—like each other wonderfully—'live and love'—ſo ſays the old ſong. The fine *animals* were invented to ſmooth the rugged paths of fate. What ſay you, my Hercules?"

"They were created to be our firſt and beſt conſolation," ſaid I; "but we are fools, and know not how to value them."

"Send the whole race to me," cried the doctor, "and I'll tell you what they

they are worth, from fourteen to five-and-thirty:—all beyond that age ſhould die. But man! the grand creature man! ſhould live for ever!—A man at the age of ſixty is in the glowing zenith of mental and corporeal beauty!"

I ſmiled.

"You are ſceptical," cried the doctor.

"I cannot heſitate to credit an opinion which is founded on experience," ſaid I; "though Heaven knows, I ſhall never live to corroborate the aſſertion."

The doctor ſtarted.

"Live!" vociferated he. "Now I think of it, I left an old woman dying!—muſt take another peep at her;—deviliſh rich. Well—Wiſh I knew where to find Amelia—arrogant little jade!—Want to give her ſome good advice;—find her out, my noble fellow! How goes your fever?—Brain cool—pulſe low—head quiet. Well."

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The doctor now buſtled off, and I ſet out to viſit my diſconſolate victim.

CHAP. LIV.

I FOUND Miſs Woodford in the deepeſt affliction: the ſacrifice ſhe had made, and the conſciouſneſs of what her parent would ſuffer, preyed upon her ſenſible mind, and almoſt reduced it to inſanity. She conjured me to reflect on the miſery to which I had expoſed her; and to decide quickly on the plan of my future intentions. I knew not how to meliorate her fate: I ought to have married her; but there was mercy in refuſing; for while ſhe had a claim upon my gratitude, while her ſorrows awakened the tenderneſs of pity, ſhe was ſure of my attentions; but had I once made her

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an honourable recompence, our mutual misery would have been the inevitable consequence; with all the hideous train of reproach, indifference, repentance, and disgust.

The agonizing regret I experienced, when memory presented that fatal moment which gave Amelia to my ungovernable revenge, rendered every other species of calamity trifling; and there was no pang, which fortune could inflict, that I could not have borne with patience, to have restored that purity of reputation which her folly and my inebriety conspired to tarnish. She was, in fact, the victim of her own fatal curiosity; on the eve of a marriage which her heart abhorred, and too tenderly prejudiced in favour of one who was unworthy of her affection, she became almost a voluntary sacrifice. I do not hope to extenuate my conduct; I do not seek to stigmatize Amelia;—yet

reflection

reflection ſometimes ſooths me with the conviction, that we were equally culpable.

I continued to viſit Miſs Woodford as my ſiſter; to conſole her affliction by the moſt unremitting attentions; and to provide every worldly comfort, as far as my ſlender fortune afforded the means: but no art, no perſuaſion could ſoften the acute ſufferings of mental torture; no outward ſhew of pleaſure compenſate for the agony of ſelf-reproof; no kind or ſoothing ſolicitude reſtore that jewel, reputation, which I had robbed her of; and which was doubly valuable where fortune dealt her favours with a ſparing hand.

We had paſſed four days in our retreat, when calling at the Mount coffee-houſe, to know if there were any letters for me, I found a note from Colonel Aubrey, informing me that he was in town for a few hours only: that he was

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to ſail for Gibraltar in two days, Lord Linbourne's death rendering his departure abſolutely neceſſary. I haſtened to his lodgings. I found him ſtrangely altered; his countenance was ſorrowful, his cheek pale, his form waſted, and his manner dejected. He embraced me with the affection of a father: I ſhrunk upon a chair before him.

"Lord Linbourne has at length paid the forfeit of his indiſcretion," ſaid Colonel Aubrey, "and my hand is ſtained with the life-blood of a fellow-creature! The reflection is terrible!" He ſhuddered, and walked haſtily about the room. I had not power to addreſs him. The recollection that he had been guilty of tolerated murder, in my defence, wrung my heart with the keeneſt reproaches. After a ſhort pauſe, he reſumed the converſation he had begun:

"Walſingham," ſaid he, "I know the ſenſibility of your mind; and I requeſted

queſted this interview to aſſure you, that I do not condemn any part of your conduct reſpecting Lord Linbourne. I was, indeed, to blame, for introducing an inexperienced boy into the ſociety of ſuch infernal harpies! My friendſhip for you is therefore undiminiſhed."

I thanked Colonel Aubrey for his unbounded generoſity: yet, conſcious that I had been the cauſe of a rencontre which had terminated ſo fatally, I felt the keeneſt anguiſh mingled with the moſt lively gratitude. He was viſibly concerned to obſerve my depreſſion of ſpirits, and with the moſt afflicting kindneſs entreated me to think no more of the adventure: "Lord Linbourne," ſaid he, "was an unworthy wretch, and little deſerves the pity of a moment. Indeed, terrible as his death appears, it was ſcarcely to be accounted painful, when compared with the pangs which I have ſince ſuffered. But time is preci-

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ous at this moment. I have buſineſs of importance to tranſact with my agent, and if you will dine with me at five o'clock, we will arrange every thing for our laſt ſeparation, or our immediate departure."

I took my leave, and haſtened back to Amelia. The few hours between my interview with Colonel Aubrey and the time appointed for dinner, I reſolved to paſs in breaking my wiſh to her, and in ſounding her mind reſpecting my voyage to Gibraltar. She met me with ſmiles of complacency, which rendered the taſk I had to perform doubly painful; for the pleaſure which I felt in ſeeing her a degree leſs melancholy, made me unwilling to ſnatch the faint gleam of peace from her boſom, and again to whelm her with a new torrent of affliction.

After various ſubjects of converſation, I ventured to mention the propenſity which I had ever felt for a military life: I told

I told her that it had been my earlieſt wiſh, and my long cheriſhed hope, that I ſhould either end my days, or attain ſome ſhare of diſtinction, on the field of warfare. She ſighed, and remained ſilent; but her features, by their inſtantaneous change, gave proof of her boſom's apprehenſion. Still—I continued:

"Neither the favourite of fame nor of fortune; alas! Amelia, what can I bring you but a frail and ſorrowing heart? How can I recompenſe you for all the anguiſh you now ſuffer, ſituated as I am, poor, abandoned by my relations, in hourly dread of a dreary captivity, and with affections irrevocably—"

"Devoted to another," interrupted Miſs Woodford, burſting into tears.

"Even ſo!" ſaid I. "To diſſemble now, would be more than blameable; it would be inhuman. You have my eſteem,—my friendſhip,—my gratitude. The dreadful moment of intoxi-

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cation which overturned my reaſon, did not render you leſs amiable, leſs virtuous! The culpability was mine:—yours, Amelia, the too credulous, too partial weakneſs of a miſplaced attachment. Conſider me henceforth as a dear brother. Return to your afflicted parent, and endeavour to forget that hour, the remembrance of which will ſcatter eternal poiſons on your pillow."

"Muſt I forget you, Walſingham?" ſaid Amelia, with a look that penetrated my heart: "Muſt I abjure every cheriſhed proſpect of happineſs, and return to my melancholy home, like a wretched penitent? Suffer me to be the partner of your enterpriſe:—I can bear the fatigues of a ſoldier's wandering life: I can even diſguiſe my ſex, to be the partaker of your peril. The heart which can really love, is ſuperior to apprehenſion. Try my courage;—prove my affection!—you cannot—you will not refuſe

refuſe me the gratification of being your companion."

The ſoftneſs of her voice,—the contraſting energy of her expreſſions,—the conſciouſneſs of my own unworthy conduct,—conſpired to check my tongue, and I continued ſtroaming about the room like one that was bewildered. Amelia's tears rouſed me from the deep and mournful reverie, "You cannot," ſaid I, "generous Amelia, indeed you cannot be the partner of my voyage. I ſhall have to croſs the wide and fickle ocean,—to dare the perils of that boiſterous element, whoſe ſtorms would terrify, and perhaps deſtroy you. Beſides, my gentle friend," continued I, taking her trembling hand, "the accommodations of a fortreſs will but ill ſuit your tender nature. My duty, as a young ſoldier, would conſign you to almoſt a perpetual ſolitude. You would look back with regret to the gay and ſplendid

did world; you would ſigh, in vain, for the paths you had deſerted."

"Heavens! how little do you know the female heart!" exclaimed Miſs Woodford: "How falſely, how injuriouſly do you paſs ſentence on the pureſt and moſt unconquerable attachment, Ungenerous Walſingham! I will not ſue for conſolation: I will endeavour to exert my fortitude; to relinquiſh every weak and fondly treaſured hope; to reſent your injuſtice, and to baniſh you from my rejected heart for ever. You ſhall behold how ſtrongly reaſon can fortify the ſoul, when love no longer undermines its faculties. You ſhall hourly witneſs my returning peace of mind, my tranquil ſcenes of pure domeſtic happineſs; and tremble, ungrateful Walſingham! while I demand, inſtead of childiſh empty adoration, reſpect, eſteem, and gratitude, as the wife of Colonel Aubrey!"

I reeled, and fell.

"Yes,

"Yes, Walſingham," cried Amelia: "Colonel Aubrey was that lover, that generous, brave, neglected lover, to whom my hand was promiſed. I will inſtantly ſeek him: I will throw myſelf at his feet; confeſs my weakneſs, and your ungenerous triumph! If he will pardon an offending ſuppliant, my whole life ſhall be devoted to the promotion of his happineſs;—days, months, and years of duty and eſteem; of faithful friendſhip,—undivided attention, and domeſtic virtue;—all, all ſhall be Colonel Aubrey's. We will croſs that perilous ocean; we will brave the hardſhips of a ſea-encircled fortreſs; we will mock the ſtorms of fate, and quit the buſy ſplendid ſcenes of life, for ever."

With difficulty I raiſed myſelf from the ground, and darted towards the door. Amelia would have held me;—my features were wild and terrible;—ſhe ſhrieked;—ſhe claſped me in her trembling

bling arms:—I tore myſelf from her;—and, like a bewildered maniac, flew towards London, in ſearch of Colonel Aubrey.

CHAP. LV.

I PURSUED my courſe, talking to myſelf incoherently, looking like one diſtracted, and totally diſregarding the foot paſſengers, who made way for me with pity and aſtoniſhment. Entering Hyde-park-corner, I met Mrs. Woodford. I ſhrunk almoſt to the earth, and paſſed her unobſerved:—ſhe was in Mrs. O'Liffy's carriage, and they were driving furiouſly towards Knightſbridge. I had not proceeded fifty yards, when two men, directed by the Duke of Heartwing's inſolent ſervant, ſeized me; a crowd aſſembled; the circumſtance of my having been advertiſed, with ſo large a re-

a reward for apprehending me, convinced the inquiſitive ſpectators (for an Engliſh populace is eaſily taught to believe any thing) that I was a notorious offender. The ſtate of my mind precluding the poſſibility of making any rational defence, I was huſtled into an hackney coach; and, followed by a long train of the idle and the curious, conveyed to a juſtice of the peace for further examination.

The juſtice not knowing how to proceed on ſo ſingular a caſe, and being newly inveſted with the dignities of his office, ordered me to be placed in ſafe cuſtody, at the houſe of a ſheriff's officer. The idea of confinement at ſo critical a moment, when Amelia was left wholly unprotected, and Colonel Aubrey on the eve of departure, added to the anticipated horrors of a long captivity, and the loſs of the opportunity which preſented itſelf, of quitting England

land for ever, overwhelmed me with affliction.

Arrived in Carey-ſtreet, and once more a priſoner, I began to ſummon my recollection, and to deviſe the moſt probable means for my ſpeedy emancipation, when the maſter of the houſe paid me a viſit. The melancholy proſpects which imagination had conjured up, ſeemed to aſſume a new and ſofter colour on the appearance of Mr. Rightly. His liberal mind and ſuavity of manners would have poured conſolation on my ſorrows, had they been of leſs magnitude in mental pangs, as well as the ſeverities of fortune. He however entreated me to conſider my temporary confinement as a mere form of law, which ſhould under his roof bring with it neither terror nor extortion. The benevolence and liberality which diſtinguiſhed his character from the herd of barbarians, who undertake the office of

tormenting their fellow-creatures, made me lament that he was not placed in that ſphere, which his merit would have honoured; at the ſame time, I conſidered it as a great benefit to the world in general, that there exiſted one man who could execute the rigours of the law, with that mildneſs and humanity which diveſted them of more than half their ſeverity.

The attorney who had iſſued the writ againſt Mr. Randolph, was gone to his villa, at ſome diſtance from the metropolis. His clerks could not give any ſatisfactory information, and I was obliged to remain that night at Mr. Rightly's. My anxiety was ſcarcely ſupportable. As time moved tardily, the fever of my mind increaſed. It was in vain that I liſtened to the voice of conſolation; no power of pity could draw my attention from the ſombre phantoms that encompaſſed me on all ſides. All Mr. Right-

ly's

ly's humanity, all his diſintereſted civilities, could not extract the thorn of ſelf-reproach which ſunk deeply in my heart. As the hours advanced, my agony increaſed, till the anguiſh of my mind burſt forth in all the wildneſs of deſpair; and before midnight I was perfectly frantic.

I diſpatched a meſſenger for my philanthropic friend Mr. Optic. He quitted his bed to obey the ſummons of diſtreſs, and in leſs than an hour I was in ſome degree conſoled by his appearance. I unfolded all the ſecrets of my heart. I knew, that in the boſom of honour and ſenſibility, I might depoſit them with ſafety. Again Mr. Optic ſtrongly urged the propriety of my marrying Miſs Woodford:—he repreſented the miſeries which were likely to aſſail her, unleſs I could make up my mind to the only compenſation which remained for me to offer. I ſhuddered at the idea. The frailty which had rendered her my

victim, made me ſuſpect that ſhe would ſcarcely fulfil, with honour, the duties of a wife. She had ſacrificed a man who was her betrothed huſband; and I had not the vanity to ſuppoſe, that ſhe would reſpect that name, merely becauſe it was ſanctioned by the ceremonies of a prieſt. This may not be the doctrine of morality, but it is the reaſoning of nature.

We ſat the whole night, talking on the ſubject; and ſoon after day-break Mr. Optic, by his own requeſt, ſet out for Kenſington, to aſſure Amelia of my ſafety, and to tranquillize her mind with the conſolations of friendſhip. I alſo wrote a few lines, earneſtly conjuring her not to ſee Colonel Aubrey till my emancipation. My ſorrows now became ſo complicated, that I ſcarcely knew which event formed the main ſpring of action on my ſenſes. Pity, compunction, reſentment, pride, and—affection, combined to torture me; each for a time

pre-

predominating, and again in its turn yielding to the encroachment of a new torment.

Before noon Mr. Optic returned. On his entering the room, I read in his countenance the ſenſations of his mind. He threw himſelf into a chair, and without uttering a ſyllable, opened, by his looks, a volume of deſpair. Every artery in my feveriſh frame was convulſed with anticipated horrors. After a violent ſtruggle between impatience and apprehenſion, I had juſt reſolution to articulate, "I truſt ſhe yet lives?"

Mr. Optic replied, "She lives; but in ſo pitiable a ſtate, that it would be happineſs to die! Her agony of mind has nearly deprived her of reaſon, and ſhe was, juſt before my arrival at her lodgings, conveyed to her mother's houſe completely wretched. I had not courage to behold her in ſuch a ſtate of ruin. I

have too often admired her, in the luſtre of her beauty, when health and innocence diffuſed a ſmile over her features, to contemplate the deſolation of both, and ſtill profeſs myſelf the friend of Mr. Ainsforth."

I ſhrunk almoſt to the ground. "Almighty God!" exclaimed I, "where will my ſorrows end? Oh, my friend!" continued I, addreſſing Mr. Optic, "for I will not ſuffer you to relinquiſh that title; adviſe me, tell me how I ought to act; deviſe ſome means to reſcue this unhappy girl from the anguiſh of deſpair."

"I have already pointed out the only ſtep you ought to take," replied Mr. Optic with a ſerious and impreſſive tone that penetrated my heart: "there is yet time to render juſtice; and, whatever enlightened philoſophy may inculcate, as long as the forms of moral virtue retain

tain the power of ſupporting the decencies of life, it is our duty to adopt them."

"I cannot love Amelia; I can eſteem, admire, and reſpect her mental virtues," ſaid I.

"By making her your wife, you will not diminiſh their claims to admiration, and you will procure for her that protection from the world, which will in ſome meaſure compenſate for the loſs of your affection," replied Mr. Optic: "ſhe will then enjoy ſome ſmall portion of repoſe. As your miſtreſs,—neither valued by ſociety nor beloved by you,—exiſtence will be inſupportable."

"I will endeavour to adopt your opinions," ſaid I; "feeling their propriety,—I will—if poſſible—become a convert to the cauſe of honour,—though at the expence of all my hopes and all my affections."

I had ſcarcely uttered theſe words, when Colonel Aubrey's name was announced. Mr. Optic took his leave, and I endeavoured to ſummon all my fortitude for the agonizing interview.

CHAP. LVI.

COLONEL Aubrey's ſorrow at beholding me in captivity for ſome moments prevented his ſpeaking. I too was ſilent, but from another cauſe;—deſtined to meet the man whoſe hands I had ſtained with blood; whoſe friendſhip I had ſo little merited; whoſe peace of mind I had deſtroyed for ever; my torture was infinite! I dreaded to expoſe Amelia's name to the prying eye of cenſure; and yet I knew not how to preſerve

ſerve her reputation, without the moſt infamous hypocriſy towards my patron, my friend! that generous, brave, and liberal friend, who, when the world forſook, adopted me! who eſpouſed my cauſe at the peril of his life; and voluntarily offered me the means of future happineſs, when deſpair had threatened to be my only companion!

No culprit at the bar of condemnation ever looked more wretchedly ſelf-convicted than I did, at the moment of Colonel Aubrey's entering the apartment. My blood ſeemed to ruſh through every vein with more than ordinary circulation; my heart throbbed with a ſenſation of cowardice, which till that moment it had never experienced; my eyes were bent upon the ground; my limbs ſcarcely able to ſuſtain me. The only wiſh of my agitated ſoul, was that of inſtant annihilation. Colonel Aubrey graſped my hand, as he ſhook it with

the moſt hearty affection. I could not return the friendly preſſure;—the remembrance of my unworthineſs benumbed every fibre in my exhauſted frame, till I fell on his ſhoulder, and groaned with agonizing conflicts.

"What poſſeſſes thee, boy?" cried Colonel Aubrey, ſhaking my arm, as if to rouſe my recollection. "Art thou frantic? Though I lament Lord Linbourne's fate, I muſt not forget that I am a man. This inordinate grief is childiſh: a ſoldier's boſom ſhould be ſteeled againſt the tenderneſs of pity. Your intercourſe with the refined part of ſociety has enervated your mind;—reſiſt—reſiſt, or you will not do honour to the profeſſion which, I truſt, you mean to adopt in future."

"I was not created to reſiſt," anſwered I, ſternly deſperate; "had the power of ſelf-denial been given me; had not my mind been contaminated by

by early prejudices, ariſing from diſappointed hopes, perhaps I had been worthy of your friendſhip: as it is, we muſt ſeparate finally. I deſerve nothing from your nice ſenſe of honour—but vengeance or contempt. Take, I conjure you, take the former; and rid me of a being, that is now inſupportable."

Colonel Aubrey ſmiled.—"I would not hurt thee, boy," ſaid he; "I would not inflict a pang on thy heart, to be maſter of the univerſe. But I am a veteran in the ſervice of love, as well as war; I can gueſs the cauſe of this ſtrange repugnance: you wiſh to evade a promiſe which was a mere ſubterfuge from greater evils. You now look forward to brighter proſpects:—ſome darling object occaſions your apoſtacy, and you are too warm an idolater to prefer the turmoil of the camp, to the enchantments of beauty."

"You

"You know not what I feel," ſaid I, pacing haſtily to and fro along the apartment.

"There you are deceived," replied Colonel Aubrey. "At the moment that I offer counſel, I am myſelf in want of conſolation. Alas! Walſingham, the ſterneſt outſide may conceal the tendereſt heart. Senſibility depends not on the purſuits of life: many a rough and bleeding ſoldier, when the din of battle ceaſes, ſighs for a beloved object, and, for her ſake, feels a pang which his wounds would not have inflicted. God knows," continued he, ſhuddering, "I would rather have faced a cannon-ball than have met the miſery which I now experience."

As he ſpoke, for the firſt time in my life, I obſerved a tear rolling heavily down his manly cheek, while his folded arms, and drooping head, ſeemed the emblems of unconquerable ſorrow.

After

After a ſilence of ſome minutes, with a deep ſigh, he reſumed the converſation.

"Walſingham," ſaid he, with painful heſitation, "you remember my journey to Glenowen?"

I bowed aſſent, for I had not power to ſpeak.

"You muſt alſo recollect the circumſtance of my borrowing money from Lady Aubrey?—It was my intention to have beſtowed that ſmall ſum as a marriage ſettlement upon a young perſon whom it has been, for a conſiderable time, my misfortune to idolize."—His voice faultered.—"Fie on this unmanly ſenſibility!" cried he. "I am aſhamed—I am, indeed, aſhamed of my weakneſs!—But this is no time for trifling; I will therefore be explicit. The pleaſing chimeras of fancy are for ever vaniſhed; the hopes, which the virtues of one, whom I thought perfect, firſt taught me to cheriſh, are now

eter-

eternally deſtroyed. Oh! Walſingham, had you known the angel I adored, you would not have wondered at my fondneſs. Yet, what had I to hope?—the inequality of our years was alone ſufficient to convince me of my error. The money which I borrowed of Lady Aubrey will now be uſeleſs: I have no debts, but ſuch as I can eaſily diſcharge; no expences, but thoſe which a ſoldier's pay will more than provide for. Accept then, my worthy, but ill-treated friend—accept the paltry ſum, and marry Iſabella."

"Iſabella!—Is not Iſabella the deſtined wife of Sir Sidney Aubrey?" ſaid I, ſtarting, and ready to ſink on the ground before him.

"Sir Sidney is not the deſtined huſband of Miſs Hanbury, believe me," replied Colonel Aubrey; "nay more, he never means to bear that title. Not three hours ago he aſſured me, upon his

his moſt ſacred word of honour, that he entertained no thoughts of making her his wife; that though, for private reaſons, ſhe paſſed for ſuch, ſhe was innocent of the ſmalleſt indiſcretion, and that his mind and ſoul were ſtrongly, irrevocably, devoted to an object, far, very far different from Iſabella."

"Would to Heaven I had known this but ten days ſooner!" ſaid I; "the intelligence comes too late to ſnatch me from deſpair. That evil power which has prevailed over every hope of happineſs ſince my weary eyes firſt ſaw the light—that infernal demon, whoſe machinations taught me to hate Sir Sidney—who drove me from my native home—eſtranged me from the ſolitudes of peace—and now taunts me with a retroſpect of bliſs which can no more return—will never quit his victim, till frenzy, or the grave, ſhall cloſe the ſcene of perſecution."

"Yet

"Yet have a little patience," cried Colonel Aubrey. "I will bear your wiſhes to Iſabella; I will be your advocate: all that has paſſed ſhall be forgotten; and if I ſee you and the object of your choice happily united, I ſhall return to Gibraltar one degree leſs ſad than I ſhould be if I left you wretched; for my own repoſe is vaniſhed, my treaſured ſtore of hopes wreſted from me by a baſe and daſtardly deſtroyer, who envied my few remaining days of joy, and robbed me, treacherouſly robbed me, of the woman I adored."

I roſe, and was haſtening towards the door. My thoughts were wild—my determinations deſperate!—Colonel Aubrey caught hold of my arm, and detained me. "Yet one word more," ſaid he, "and I have done. I alſo beg that you will accept a commiſſion in my regiment, with leave to join us in ſix or twelve months, whichever ſhall be

be moſt agreeable to yourſelf and Iſabella."

"Have a care!" ſaid I wildly. "You know not what you ſay!—on whom you heap ſuch agonizing kindneſs!—you are not ſenſible that I am——"

"What?" cried Colonel Aubrey, changing colour, and alarmed by my frenzied manner.

"The ruin of your peace!—the infernal fiend, whom hell has choſen for your evil genius!—the mad, impetuous fool who urged your hand to ſhed the blood of Lord Linbourne!—and, to fill up the horrible account of crimes, the deſtroyer of Amelia!"

Colonel Aubrey reeled back a few paces, and fell. I ſnatched up his ſword, which he had laid on the table, and, darting out of the room, flew towards my chamber.

CHAP. LVII.

I WAS haſtening towards the apartment where I ſlept, and uttering a variety of frantic ejaculations, when I met Mr. Rightly, who, judging by my looks that I meditated miſchief, ſtopped, and diſarmed me. The taſk was not difficult; for ſorrow, blended with compunction, ſo completely enervated my whole frame, that an infant might have overpowered me. I knew not what to do:—the diſtreſs which Colonel Aubrey evidently laboured under, and of which my precipitate conduct had been the original cauſe, was, with all its poignancy, trifling in compariſon with what I at that moment ſuffered. Not only the miſeries of my beſt and moſt generous friend, but the deſtruction of an innocent and amiable girl, preſſed heavily

on

on my conſcience. What was to be done under this accumulation of diſtreſs?—I had no remedy but in an act of deſperation, no hope of tranquillity but in the grave.

Colonel Aubrey, after a ſhort ſtruggle between reſentment and pity, quitted the houſe. I now had leiſure and ſolitude to indulge my mournful ruminations, and the retroſpect which they preſented was terrible in the extreme: The friend on whoſe liberal mind I could have relied for the conſolations of reaſon, was, by my raſh actions, and no leſs imprudent avowal of them, eſtranged from me for ever. I had, after all the kindneſs which he had ſhewn me, after the voluntary protection and regard which his liberal heart had beſtowed, not only embrued his hands in blood, but wrung his boſom with the moſt undeſcribable tortures. I had, towards Mrs. Woodford, acted no leſs unworthily:

worthily: ſhe, whoſe houſe had been my ſanctuary, my ſafe and honourable aſylum, when I was charged with crimes, branded with infamy—even ſhe had not eſcaped the anguiſh of repentance, for having foſtered in the boſom of friendſhip that being who was deſtined to rob her only child of honour and repoſe. Poor Amelia! thy ſenſibility, thy diſintereſted affection, were the bane of all that is dear to reputation, or ſacred to hoſpitality!—Had I never been received as the inmate of thy abode, thou hadſt yet been pure and happy. Thy virtues were thy deſtroyers; for the ſtrong reſemblance which they bore to thoſe which once embelliſhed the mind of Iſabella, not only bewildered my ſenſes, but laid the foundation for every future ſorrow.

As ſoon as Colonel Aubrey was gone, I wrote a letter to Mrs. Woodford, propoſing to make Amelia every

honourable recompence in my power, and conjuring her to allow me an interview, in order that we might ſettle preliminaries for that purpoſe. I had ſealed the propoſal, and was directing it, when the following laconic note arrived from Colonel Aubrey:

" If the object of my affection has been baſely ſeduced, if her honour has been ſacrificed to your artifice, I can yet pardon her deviation from chaſtity; I can yet receive the deluded girl to my fond, fooliſh heart. But if, on the contrary, you are the object of her choice— I expect that you reſcue her from infamy, and beſtow on her that title to which ſhe has a claim by all the laws of rectitude and humanity. Send me a brief and candid anſwer; for there is no time to trifle, where a woman's reputation and happineſs are in imminent danger. The world may condemn me;

me; but I ſhall feel a more delightful gratification in ſnatching an amiable object from the inſults of the world, than ever the libertine experienced in ſeducing innocence from the paths of virtue."

I read the letter over and over, and every time with augmented veneration for the character of that man, whoſe affection ſet the voice of calumny at defiance, and whoſe ſenſibility could pity the frailty of a beloved object, at the ſame moment that his humanity reſcued her from deſpair. After a variety of reflections—an infinity of pain,—I ſnatched up my pen, and, with a trembling hand, haſtily wrote this anſwer:

"Amelia is the moſt amiable of women!—her virtues cannot be tarniſhed by her deviation from chaſtity. She was the victim of an innocent de-

ception—I, an involuntary ſeducer. If you can ſummon reſolution to brave the malice of the world, you will find every pure and tranſcendent qualification ſtill embelliſhing the gentle, the unfortunate object of your generous attachment. As paſt events preclude the poſſibility of our ever meeting in future, accept my moſt grateful acknowledgments for friendſhip that has been unbounded, and endeavour to forget that a being exiſts, whoſe perverſe fortune has rendered you ſo vile a recompence."

The letter being diſpatched, I again indulged the ruminations of deſpair. The idea of ſelf-deſtruction, which had frequently predominated in my mind in moments of calamity, now ſeemed to acquire a deciſive victory over all the ſuggeſtions of fortitude and reaſon. I ventured to doubt the criminality of the deed, and the being, who in matters of moral tendency can once be-

come a ſceptic, will not heſitate in time to avow himſelf a decided apoſtate. The world had no proſpect of happineſs for me; Fortune frowned upon my hopes, and Nature ſhuddered while reflection pointed out the temptations with which the proud, yet feeling heart, is environed in the dreary paths of adverſity. Born to deſtroy the peace of every being whoſe affection foſtered me, I had only one ſtep to take, if I continued to exiſt, which was to fly from ſociety, and to become a voluntary recluſe, a ſolitary miſanthropiſt.

Mr. Rightly endeavoured to ſooth my mind by promiſes of every ſervice that his power could render me. The lawyer, whom Mr. Randolph's creditor had employed, was ſtill engaged with a party on a pleaſurable excurſion; and, till his return to the paths of profeſſional duty, I was under the neceſſity of remaining a priſoner. Mrs. Rightly was

a polite and amiable woman: I was indulged with an apartment at their private houſe, and, on my *parole d'honneur*, became one of the family. My chagrin, notwithſtanding all this marked indulgence, was not to be overcome. I gave way to the moſt inceſſant and mournful meditation, till, by loſing both ſleep and appetite, I was confined to my chamber, and in extreme danger.

The politeneſs and liberality with which I was treated, ſecured my perſon more effectually than the heavieſt bolts, or the cloſeſt doubly-grated windows of the ſtrongeſt priſon. From theſe I ſhould probably have meditated an eſcape, but Mr. Rightly held me by the ſpell of confidence—the magic of gratitude—which, to an honourable mind, is the moſt powerful of all enchantments. I paſſed my time in the ſociety of a worthy man, and an excellent, charming woman, till ſickneſs overwhelmed

whelmed me; even then their attentions did not diminiſh; for that which was originally the effect of good-nature and politeneſs, now became the genuine exertion of the pureſt humanity.

I lingered ſeveral days, before my illneſs began to abate in the ſmalleſt degree: when the violence of the fever had exhauſted itſelf, a circumſtance occurred which gave a new aſpect to my ſituation —This was no other than an unexpected and happy reverſe in Mr. Randolph's finances. News had arrived that his Weſt-India ſugar and cotton plantations had yielded an uncommonly rich crop; and, in addition to this liberal gift of Nature, Fortune had beſtowed on him a prize of ten thouſand pounds in the State Lottery. The letter which Mr. Rightly had written to the attorney had been unopened till it was ſent with one from Mr. Randolph into the country— the latter contained a draft to the amount

for

for which he had originally been arreſted; with earneſt injunctions to diſcover my retreat, and to procure my immediate emancipation, whatever the ſum might be for which I was in cuſtody. With ſome management, and the friendly aſſiſtance of Mr. Rightly, the action for an eſcape was compromiſed—the plaintiff, being a man in reduced circumſtances, but ſufficiently acquainted with the world to know, that the perſecutor who wins at a game of law is generally a loſer; while his vanquiſhed antagoniſt, though completely ruined, can laugh at the victor, at the ſame moment that he ſmarts from his malevolence.

Having once more obtained the firſt of human bleſſings, liberty, I engaged a place in a ſtage-coach, and in the afternoon ſet out for Briſtol. My health was ſo much impaired by ſickneſs and by ſorrow, that change of air and the conſolations of friendſhip were abſo-

lutely neceſſary for its reſtoration. It is impoſſible to deſcribe my ſenſations during the firſt fifty miles of my long journey.—Amelia's ſufferings,—Iſabella's myſterious conduct,—and Colonel Aubrey's juſt diſpleaſure, agonized my mind, and rendered me inſenſible to all other objects; till an event, as dangerous as it was common, rouſed me from the lethargy of ſorrow, and, for a ſhort period, diverted my melancholy from its long and deep courſe of gloomy meditation.

Within a few miles of Marlborough, the coachman ſtopped to water his horſes at a ſmall public-houſe by the road-ſide.—He quitted his box, after ordering a bowl of hot rum and water, and with the moſt inconſiderate compoſure entered the houſe. The paſſengers, three beſide myſelf, waited with fear and impatience a conſiderable time; till one of them, whom Sterne would have denominated

nominated a diſcontented traveller, after damning all ſtage-coaches, and declaring that more lives were loſt, and more horſes deſtroyed by them, than by all other ſources of caſualty, began to call loudly for the thoughtleſs guide—but his voice was unregarded; for we ſaw the coachman, through the kitchen window, contentedly ſeated by the fire-ſide, and enjoying his bowl with invincible compoſure.

The irritated traveller every moment grew more and more inclined to remonſtrate; he bawled and ſwore, and in the moſt violent invectives reprobated the atrocity of that conduct, which expoſed the lives of four perſons to ſuch imminent danger.—The coachman paid little or no attention to his complaints, till rage got the better of prudence, and he became the angry traveller. The door was thrown open with furious impetuoſity, and without waiting for letting down the ſteps, the impatient and

wrathful traveller leaped from the carriage.—He fell; and, by his precipitate ſpeed, ſo fractured his leg, that he was conveyed to a chamber, groaning and curſing, cloſing the ſcene of his bitter reſentment in the miſerable character of the wounded and repentant traveller!

I quitted the coach and flew to his aſſiſtance, when to my infinite ſurpriſe I diſcovered that it was the inſolent domeſtic of the Duke of Heartwing; we had only taken him up at Marlborough, he having proceeded ſo far on horſeback, but being weary, preferred the eaſe of a ſtage-coach during the remainder of his journey. The darkneſs of the hour had prevented my ſeeing his features, which, though diſtorted by agony, on entering the chamber I inſtantly recognized. I ſtarted back: reflection told me that my enemy was not in a condition to bear reproaches; and, leſt reſentment ſhould for a moment get the better of humanity,

ity, I again deſcended to the kitchen, where I had left the coachman finiſhing his morning draught.

After diſpatching a meſſenger to Marlborough for a ſurgeon, I diſcovered to my great diſappointment, that the ſtage-coach had departed during the ſcene of confuſion, the guide being apprehenſive that diſagreeable conſequences would ariſe from his neglect, and the accident which it had occaſioned.

Upon inquiry I found that the domeſtic had obtained his reward for apprehending me, and was proceeding to Bath, for the purpoſe of engaging a houſe, and arranging accommodations, to receive the Duke of Heartwing, who was to leave London on the following day. After giving orders that every thing ſhould be done for the ſufferer's convenience, I quitted the public-houſe, and on foot once more ſet out for Bath.

My road led acroſs the downs; the weather was ſtormy, the ſky thick and cloudy: I had piſtols, loaded, about me; and, being equally a ſtranger to hope as to fear, I proceeded without the ſmalleſt apprehenſion of danger.

CHAP. LVIII.

I HAD not walked more than a mile, when I was ſuddenly overtaken by two men on horſeback; they ſlackened their pace as they paſſed me, and ſtopping ſhort, entered into converſation. The moon was juſt beginning to riſe, and its faint beams at intervals penetrated the ſcattered clouds, which were borne rapidly along by a keen and boiſterous wind. I could perceive that the horſemen were well mounted; and they had alſo

alſo light ſufficient to diſcover that I was equipped as a pedeſtrian. Several queſtions, or rather obſervations, paſſed on both ſides, I was glad to find companions, and that the ſtrangers ſeemed inclined to accompany me over the wide and ſolitary downs which lay before us.

One of the travellers diſmounted, and leading his horſe, walked ſlowly on beſide me. The other kept a few paces before us, at times joining in converſation, and looking about him with more than common precaution; till, ſuddenly checking his horſe, he exclaimed, addreſſing his companion, "By G—d, it will ſoon be day-break—Why don't you wiſh the gentleman a good journey."

At this inſtant my walking aſſociate preſented a piſtol, and demanded my money. I had never ceaſed to graſp mine within my coat pocket ſince the horſemen firſt overtook me; the highwayman perceived my intention to de-

fend myſelf, and inſtantly fired; his piſtol flaſhed in the pan; I returned the ſhot with ſucceſs, for the robber fell; and a carriage at that moment coming in ſight, his daſtardly companion ſet off full ſpeed acroſs the downs towards Saliſbury. I ſoon found that the vehicle was a mail-coach. I called to them to ſtop, and ran towards the horſes' heads, but the guard preſenting his blunderbuſs, bade me "keep off," or he would fire. The wind whiſtled too loudly for my voice to be diſtinctly heard, and I had no alternative but that of mounting the wounded highwayman's horſe, and proceeding towards Bath with all poſſible expedition.

Arriving at Devizes, I ſtopped at the firſt inn, and inquired for the landlord, in order to acquaint him with what had happened; but I had ſcarcely entered the houſe when a courier, with two aſſiſtants, ſeized me; and vociferating—

"This is the raſcal who robbed my lady," dragged me into a parlour, locked the door, and made me a priſoner.

Rage and conſternation at firſt rendered me incapable of reſiſting their violence; but reaſon ſoon whiſpered that anger is never the aſſociate of innocence; and, that if I would extricate myſelf from this new dilemma, I muſt act with cool deliberate fortitude. After a few moments of reflection, I calmly inquired upon what grounds they ſuſpected my honeſty. "Look at me," ſaid I, addreſſing the courier; "do I appear equipped for the office of a highwayman—without either boots, or ſpurs, or a diſguiſe of any deſcription?"

"I know your horſe," replied the courier; "I will ſwear to him amongſt a thouſand."

"Will you alſo ſwear to my perſon?" ſaid I, with a ſmile which I could not ſuppreſs,

ſuppreſs, when I obſerved the aſſured confidence of my accuſer.

"I know nothing about your perſon," ſaid he; "you wore a black crape over your face; and your boots might eaſily have been diſpoſed of, to give a colour to your ſtory, in caſe of detection. We ſhould not have been ſo rigorous if you had not fired into the chaiſe, and terrified my lady."

My pockets were rifled; when the two piſtols, one loaded and the other diſcharged, corroborated the evidence againſt me. I was now conducted into a drawing-room, in order to aſcertain whether the lady who had been robbed could identify my perſon. Little regarding the event of ſuch a trial, and certain that all which I could ſay would be miſconſtrued, while prejudice prepoſſeſſed the minds of my accuſers, I attended the domeſtics without heſitation,

tion, and in a few moments was uſhered into the preſence of the trembling Lady Emily Delvin.

She viewed me attentively; but with that ſort of freezing contempt which did not condeſcend to recognize an old acquaintance in diſtreſs. I waited to ſee how far her inhumanity would lead her, when aided by the ſtern auxiliaries pride and reſentment. I had forgot that few women ever forgive an inſtance of perſonal contempt: I had been too honeſt when Lady Emily diſtinguiſhed me by her notice; and ſhe now conſidered me as too much in her power to eſcape that puniſhment which was due to my inſenſibility.

I fixed my eyes on her's with calm and ſteady fortitude.—She neither bluſhed nor heſitated.

"Yes," ſaid ſhe with eaſy effrontery, "it is the man—I am almoſt certain that it is the ſame figure, though his dreſs has

has been changed. I think the countenance is alſo very like."

"The highwayman's face was covered with black crape, my lady," interrupted the courier.

Lady Emily ſeemed rather diſconcerted——"The fellow's complexion might have deceived you," ſaid ſhe, averting her eyes, and no longer able to encounter the ſteady gaze of innocence. I could not ſuppreſs a ſmile, which was the effect of my ſecret triumph.

"Lady Emily," ſaid I, "is it poſſible that you can feign at a moment ſo critical, ſo menacing to my ſafety?"

She drew up her form, and, exalting her eye-brows with the moſt inſulting barbarity, replied—"This is not your *firſt* offence; and I conſider myſelf bound by the laws of retribution to puniſh your ingratitude."

While ſhe concluded theſe words ſhe quitted the room, and left me at the mercy of

of her insolent agents. As she departed I could not help repeating a silly stanza which I had written at a very early age, and which, till that hour, had never since recurred to my memory.—

O woman! greatest friend or foe,
Thou source of bliss or evil!
To man, the certain weal or woe,
An angel or a devil!
Since mother Eve, the sex has been
To wide creation given,
To make this busy bustling scene
A very Hell or Heaven!

CHAP. LIX.

I was immediately conveyed to priſon, there to wait till ſeveral meſſengers, who were diſpatched in ſearch of the wounded highwayman, ſhould return either to detect me in a fabricated ſtory, or to confirm my innocence of the charge alleged againſt me.

I was ſcarcely vexed at my ſituation.—Having ſo frequently been the victim of falſe appearances, this event did not excite the leaſt emotion. The effrontery of Lady Emily impreſſed my mind much more than the accuſation againſt me. I recollected the earlieſt opinion which ſhe left upon my memory, when ſhe diſcarded and condemned to death the gentle intelligent Chance, to make room for a trifling, inſignificant ſtranger.

The

The concluſion may not be far removed from probability, that the boſom which can treat with cruelty an attached and faithful dog, would not heſitate to perſecute a neglectful and offending lover with equal rancour, and equal perſeverance.

Waiting patiently for the reſult of the inquiries ſet on foot, I began to imagine that my exiſtence was ordained to be one perpetual ſcene of trial; and that all my efforts to counteract the will of fate muſt prove ineffectual: with this idea, which might be authorized by many a predeſtinarian, whoſe opinions have been confirmed by the caprices of nature, I reſigned myſelf to the unwearied hand of perſecution, neither ſeeking to repel nor hoping to arreſt the arrows of deſtruction.

As I have before remarked, the muſe never forſook me, when fortune was moſt ſevere: I no ſooner entered my priſon than,

than, with no light but that which a grated window afforded, I wrote the following little ode, in humble imitation of Pope's juvenile production:

How bleſt is he, who born to tread
The ſilent paths of ſweet repoſe,
Finds peace beneath the rural ſhed,
Which pomp ne'er knows.

Who roves, with independent mind,
O'er hills and meads and flow'ry plains,
That feaſt on Nature's lap to find
Which pride diſdains.

How bleſt! to ſing, and talk, and ſmile,
The buſy envious world forgot,
To fear no lurking ſtings of guile,
In his low cot.

When high the matin lark is ſeen
With flutt'ring wings, and ſhrilly ſong,
He ſaunters o'er the dewy green,
And fears no wrong.

And when the ſultry ſun flames high,
He ſeeks the rural ſhade or dell,
No fierce banditti lurking nigh,
With murd'rous ſpell.

As ev'ning's crimſon ſhadows fade,
And twilight ſpreads its mantle grey,
He plods along the upland glade,
Serenely gay.

Then on ſome pallet, clean and low,
He ſleeps, nor dreams of ills the while;
And when the eaſtern mountains glow,
He wakes to ſmile.

He ſhuns the pride of wealth and birth,
No vaſſal's lord, no tyrant's ſlave;
His cot the haunt of modeſt worth,
The turf his grave.

In the courſe of the day the meſſengers returned; the wounded highwayman had either contrived to eſcape, or had been conveyed from the ſpot where he fell by his confederates. The track of blood, however, corroborated my report, and a farther evidence confirmed my innocence. This was no other than the maſter of a ſmall public-houſe, where the highwayman had ſupped the preceding night, who remembered the horſe,

horſe, and poſitively ſwore that I was not the perſon whom he had ſeen mount him a little before midnight. This clear and voluntary evidence was conſiderably ſtrengthened by the general character of the witneſs, who was known by the name of Honeſt Ned, of the Black Lion.

As ſoon as I was ſet at liberty, I thought it moſt adviſable to make the beſt of my way out of the town. Curioſity having drawn together a vaſt concourſe of people, I obtained information of a private road which led through lanes and meadows, and again ſet out on foot to avoid every impediment, and to elude obſervation.

I had ſome time loſt ſight of the town, when compunction ſtruck upon my heart for having neglected to reward the honeſt fellow whoſe voluntary interference had ſnatched me from ſo unpleaſant a dilemma. Actuated by that ſtrong and unaccountable impulſe which

through

through life has led me on to peril, I turned ſuddenly back, and reſolved to viſit the habitation of Honeſt Ned. I inquired the way, and was directed acroſs a wide common, near half a mile from the high road.—I haſtened thither with leſs prudence than expedition: it was almoſt dark when I entered the houſe; the landlord had not yet returned from Devizes, and there was no perſon at home excepting an old woman, who was deaf and nearly fooliſh, and a lad, who either could not or would not give me any ſatisfactory information.

Having been too much engaged during the day to think of eating, I now began to find hunger an unſatisfied companion. Some cold meat and an excellent tankard of ale being ſet before me, I commenced my meal with an appetite which rendered the moſt homely fare exquiſitely delicious. I had ſcarcely began to eat, when taking the tankard

which

which foamed with nut-brown liquor, I perceived that the handle was ſlightly ſtained with crimſon.—A ſudden horror ſeized me! I examined it minutely; the mark was evidently made by a bloody hand. My conſternation conjured up a thouſand wild ideas: the houſe was loneſome—the night dark—the wind howled over the common—and no carriage was to be had nearer than three miles.

In the confuſion of the day I had forgot to demand my piſtols, which had been taken from me, and my ſituation was painfully perplexing—it was dangerous to ſtay, it would have been cowardly to depart. I knew, by fatal experience, that conjecture was apt to miſlead where appearances were ſuſpicious. The reflection lulled my alarm, and I reſolved to await the arrival of Honeſt Ned, let the conſequences be what they may.

Midnight came, and my landlord was ſtill abſent. I queſtioned the old woman—but ſhe returned anſwers ſo incoherent, that I ſoon found my inquiries uſeleſs. The night continued ſtormy; the rain pattered againſt the caſements, and the wind whiſtled over the heath more ſhrilly than ever. I ſeated myſelf by the expiring embers of a wood fire, the houſe affording no bed for travellers, and being drowſy after a day of ſuch buſy inquietude, was ſinking into a heavy ſlumber, when a deep groan awakened me. I ſprung from my chair, and liſtened attentively—no noiſe was heard but the bleak blaſt which with ſhort intervals yelled round the low roof; and the ſonorous reſpiration of the old woman, who ſnored by the fire-ſide in the adjoining kitchen. After again liſtening during ſeveral minutes, I reſumed my ſeat, collected the dying embers, repleniſhed the hearth with a

freſh log of fuel, and, overpowered by fatigue of mind and body, again prepared to ſlumber.

CHAP. LX.

I HAD ſlept ſome time, when I was ſtartled by a ſudden noiſe, which at firſt I could ſcarcely account for, till a ſecond tap at the window-ſhutter convinced me that ſome one wiſhed to enter. I informed the old woman, who inſtantly rouſed herſelf, and proceeded to open the door. I kept myſelf as much as poſſible concealed, only peeping through a crevice in the thin wainſcot, which divided the parlour from the kitchen. The landlord entered, followed by a well-dreſſed man: they were both booted and ſpurred. The lad was ordered to take their horſes into the ſtable, and I liſtened

liſtened with anxious attention to all their proceedings.

They aſcended a ſmall ſtaircaſe, which was nearly oppoſite to the aperture of obſervation, the old woman carrying a light, and ſtill half aſleep. I heard them open a chamber door. This was no moment for childiſh apprehenſion: the hour, the place, the blood-ſtained tankard, and the ſcene before me, demanded more than ordinary reſolution. I quitted the parlour, and ſtealing up the ſtairs approached the chamber door, where I heard confuſed whiſperings, but nothing diſtinctly. I now recollected that, when the landlord entered, I had obſerved his companion place his piſtols on the kitchen table. Again I deſcended ſoftly, and arming myſelf, reſolved to explore this myſterious adventure, or to periſh in the trial. Once more at the threſhold of the bed-chamber, I heard diſtinctly half-ſmother-

ed groans, and the low deep hum of voices, almoſt inceſſant. "Jeſus, have mercy! how he bleeds!" exclaimed the old woman. "Peace, you fool," cried one of the men, whom by his accent I judged to be the landlord: "the thing will ſoon be done; the knives are ſharp, and neceſſity has no law." Again an agonized groan made my blood almoſt freeze with horror. No longer able to remain a patient liſtener under ſuch circumſtances, I ſuddenly threw open the door, and ruſhed into the apartment, when the objects preſented to my view inſtantly unravelled the myſtery. The perſon who had arrived with the landlord was a ſurgeon, who at the moment of my entering the room was extracting a ball from the ſhoulder of a young man, who lay in the bed, pale, and evidently in extreme torture.

Though there remained not a doubt in my own mind, that the wounded perſon

ſon was the highwayman, whom I had met on Marlborough Downs, I felt every vein in my heart throb with pity when I beheld his agonizing ſituation. Every drop of blood that trickled from his wound, ſeemed to waſh away the enormity of his tranſgreſſion. He raiſed his languid eyes, with imploring contrition;—he ſeemed to recollect, and to fear me. I threw my piſtols on a chair which ſtood near the bed, and with involuntary commiſeration inquired, whether I could be of ſervice.

The young man, for though checked in his career of guilt, he was not much older than myſelf, with a feeble voice thanked me: the ſurgeon ſhook his head: the landlord hung his brow, abaſhed and ſelf-reproved. I was no longer in doubt: the fact was evident. The ſurgeon performed his operation with ſkill and humanity. I paid him for his trouble, deſired him to come

again, and, without aſking any queſtions, he departed for Bath, from whence the landlord had brought him. It was time that the exhauſted ſufferer ſhould endeavour to ſleep. I whiſpered an aſſurance that he had nothing to fear from me; and again deſcended to the parlour.

Requeſting honeſt Ned to bring another tankard of his beſt ale, we ſat down together to drink it. On finiſhing my draught, and preſenting the handle to my companion, he perceived the mark of blood which was ſtill viſible. His face grew wan,—his hand trembled,—he could ſcarcely lift the tankard;—he drank little, and with pretended awkwardneſs ſpilt the remainder, ſo as to completely waſh away the ſtain. "Honeſt Ned!" ſaid I ſmiling, "is that the way you rub off ſcores? You ſhould have been leſs precipitate, if only to remind you of the debt of kindneſs which your

your gueſt will ſcarcely be able to repay. Let the tankard be waſhed clean, and we will drink to the reformation of your wounded lodger." The lad was diſpatched to the cellar, and the landlord began to feel compunction. "If you have patience to hear my ſtory," he, "you will acquit my conſcience of every diſhoneſt motive."

"Proceed," ſaid I.

The landlord ſwallowed a large draught to mend his ſhattered reſolution; and then, after many "herns" and "ha's," and heſitating "wells," and "ſo's," and "as your honour is thinking—and as I was a-ſaying,"—at length began to confeſs the whole buſineſs.

"I muſt tell you," cried he, "before I begin my ſtory, that the poor gentleman above, is a gentleman: and though I am mightily afeard that he has

taken the road of his betters, and turned to wicked ways—"

"That is to ſay, to *high*-ways," interrupted I, ſmiling. The narrator continued:—

"You muſt know that the ſilly young man has many grand relations, aye and rich ones: his mother is a great gentlewoman, worth a power of money, which ſhe means to leave to this untoward boy. And ſo, you muſt know, as I was a-telling you, all in high ſtyle, comes he to Bath; and wiſhing to outdo all outdoings, he brings with him a new-faſhioned carbuncle, and two blood nags;—nice cattle, your honour!"

"I don't comprehend you," ſaid I.

"Why," continued the landlord, "a go-by-the-ground, with two wheels, juſt for all the world like a cart: why you may ſee um as thick as hops along the Weſtern road: ſcarce a day paſſes, but I meet

I meet one of your quality-folks flying along, without a head, who but they, for the benefit of the duſt."

"Without a head! I am now more at a loſs than ever," ſaid I.

"Why they have no tilt to kiver um from the weather. Sometimes indeed they've a got a pair of little bits of wings, for all the world like a butter-fly—"

"You mean a curricle," ſaid I.

"Aye, a chronicle," cried Ned, nodding over his tankard, and more than half aſleep. "So, as I was a-telling you, to Bath he comes; who but he; as flaſhy as may be, and as gay as a lord. He was ſoon made much of; and taken up and ſquat down, like any thing. He was the very town-talk of all Bath; viſited and idleiſed by the quality all the way from Landſdown to the Avon. Every houſe was welcome to him, and every lady was at his ſarvice.

He'd a rare time on't to be ſure, and enough to do, God knows. But the evil day was at hand, as parſon ſaid laſt Sunday, and he's as good a chriſtian as ever broke bread, let the other be where he will. He has been rector of our pariſh ever ſince his great great great grandfather's time, a matter of a hundred and fifty years, or thereabouts; and he preaches every Sunday, who but he, as freſh as a four-year-old, and as ſober as a judge: 'tisn't all your fat biſhops that can ſay as much, your honour."

"True; but go on with your ſtory."

"So, as I was a-telling you," continued honeſt Ned, "who ſhould fall in love with him but my Lady Emily Delver! O! your honour, ſhe's a deep one! She can do a bit of dirty work as well as her neighbours. If ſhe isn't as arrant a—knave—as ever was hanged, I'm no conjuror!"

"I believe you," ſaid I: "go on."

"There

"There was a man, not long ago, tried at our ſizes, who was ſent beyond-ſeas for a leſs matter than theſe quality ladies does daily, every mother's ſon of 'em, or I know who's belied moſt damnably: God forgive me for ſwearing, but I can never think of their ways but my blood boils, as it were. Why, there was a lord at Bath not long ſince, that was found out in one of his odd tricks, and a got himſelf killed as a ſample for others!"

"Well, well, go on with your ſtory," ſaid I.

"As I was a-telling you, my Lady Delver, and her accompliſhers, gets him to gaming-table: ſuch doings! Night after night, day after day, Sundays and working-days, on goes they, till off goes he! For, as I hope to be ſaved, they didn't leave him a braſs farthing to pay turnpike. So then, aping his betters, he takes up with

bad company, and comes and lodges with I. And, as parſon ſays, "charity covereth a multitude of ſins," I thought a little matter on't ſhewn to a poor body in diſtreſs, might be of ſarvice to him. And to keep him from making away with himſelf, for one misfortune ſeldom comes alone, I lends him my brown nag: there isn't a cleverer bit of blood in the county, your honour. I bought him of a groom that took him for part of his wagers, when his maſter, he was one of your quality too, morriced off, and paid his creditors nothing in the pound. I'll tell you how it happened."

"At a future period," ſaid I: "finiſh your ſtory firſt, and then we will talk of other matters."

"So as I was a-telling you, the young ſpendthrift rogue, being as dull as a cat, and as poor as a church mouſe, I lends him my brown nag; and he buys him, after a trial, with a promiſſory note for forty

forty pounds, to be paid when he comes to years of diſcretion—"

"On doomſday," interrupted I gravely.

"Why may be ſo, or Midſummer, or Michaelmas, or ſome ſuch day. Hard days for us poor tenants: the quality don't mind how we get it, ſo as they have it. Our lord of the manor has got an old ſteward,—a bitter one as ever broke bread! as ſharp as a needle, and as cunning as a fox, your honour. As ſure as pay-day arrives, here comes he, and away goes I, to fetch my canvaſs bag, no ſooner full than empty! Then I toils and works like carrier's horſe againſt next pay-day. But I'm getting out of my ſtory again."

A draught of ale repleniſhed his memory, and he continued the narrative.

"So, as I was a-telling you, he was never at reſt waking nor ſleeping. Always grumbling and making one as hip-

piſh

piſh as may be. And there uſed to come a ſort of a ſcape-grace to conſult with him; an odd haram-ſcare-'em chap; a ſort of a baſtard ſprig of quality, your honour; one of your fortune-hunters. Bath ſwarms with 'em. Only laſt ſummer a young lady abſconds with one of um; a married man! But miſs was one of the gay ones; ſhe was a deep hand at an odd trick, and as loving as may be: they ſay that's the way with all your quality ladies."

"Well, and what became of your lodger and your brown nag?" ſaid I.

"Why laſt night, juſt as clock ſtruck eleven, within a minute or ſo, out goes he, with the devil at his heels, and I follows him."

"At his heels?" ſaid I.

"Cloſe as wax, your honour, till he comes to ſtable door. In a goes, and ſaddles the brown nag, curſing and damning all the while, who but he?

Then

Then I begins to argify the matter, but he was as deaf as a poſt, and as obſtinate as a mule: till ſeizing the bridle, up goes he, and a'ter him goes I, bawling and ſwearing, till I could hear the hoofs of the beaſt no longer."

"Well, and how came he home?" ſaid I.

"In cart, your honour. Many a man has gone to a worſe home, in a better carriage. 'Tisn't all gold that glitters. So as I was a-telling you, midnight coming on apace, and a bitter night 'twas, and young ſpark being inclined to play truant, I begins to grow dubous, and in a twinkling takes cart, and ſets out, who but I, a'ter my brown nag. I ſoon came to Marlborough Downs, and there, a little after day-break, I finds young 'ſquire groaning and bleeding, who but he. I vow and declare, my heart yearned when I ſaw him in ſuch a pitiful plight. The ſight of cart made him

him caper like a parched pea, your honour, as though he thought it ominous; ſo up goes he, and a'ter him goes I; and off we ſet, along by-ways and lanes, and ſuch like, till his eyes once more ſpied out our old black lion."

"What could tempt him to ſo raſh and criminal an action?" ſaid I.

"Example, your honour; high company led on to high ways; and one of the gang put it into his head to rob my lady:—ſo he ſwears to do it, who but he! and away they go, the devil at their heels, juſt before her ladyſhip's; up to the window goes he, and into a quandary goes ſhe. Then, 'ſquire axes for a purſe which my lady had before taken from ſomebody elſe, and ſo the matter ended."

By the time that honeſt Ned concluded his long-ſpun narrative, the ſun began to enter our caſement. We parted. I threw myſelf into a wicker chair.

chair by a blazing fire, and ſunk into a deep ſleep, which laſted ſeveral hours.

CHAP. LXI.

As ſoon as I awoke I repaired to the chamber of the unfortunate and raſh ſufferer. He ſhrunk at the ſight of me, and ſeemed overwhelmed with compunction. I entered into earneſt converſation with him, and propoſed, if he felt himſelf capable of bearing the motion of a carriage, that he ſhould remove nearer to Bath, for the advantage of chirurgical aſſiſtance. "Let me periſh here," ſaid he; "why prolong a few ſhort hours of life, to ſuffer a public and ignominious death?" His agitated voice, the tortures of mental, united with corporeal

poreal ſufferings, ſubdued my reſentment, and I promiſed to conceal his crime, with the hope that his remaining days would be devoted to repentance.

" Alas!" ſaid he, ſtretching forth his arms, and claſping his trembling hands, " I am more unfortunate than criminal. Robbed at a gaming-table, I ſought to recover that which had been ſtolen from me; but my hand reſiſted the office of a murderer; the piſtol was diſcharged at random, and I failed in the firſt; yes, I call God to witneſs! the firſt diſhoneſt act that my mind ever meditated. My aſſociate and counſellor reproved my timidity, and attributed that trepidation to cowardice, which was in fact the effect of conſcious horror. I would have left him. I propoſed relinquiſhing the fatal expedition: ' Then, ſaid he, ' *my* life is at *your* mercy, *you* will turn evidence, and *I* ſhall ſuffer for my credulous reliance on a mean deſigning coward.'

The

The idea rendered me desperate. To this infamous associate I was indebted thirty pounds, won at a public hazard-table. He had demanded payment from day to day; he now urged me with threats, and at length taunted me with reproaches: called me a tame and whining block-head, who, with Fortune eternally before me, turned from her to be miserable. I dared not resent his conduct; he had me in the toil; my *life* was in his hands:—we crossed the Downs together. I confessed my want of resolution to commit so vile a deed. We stopped our horses at a small distance from the high road, and for some minutes conversed upon the subject. No other carriage passed and you appeared in sight. 'You cannot fear a foot-passenger,' said my companion: 'try once more, and if you have any manly courage in your nature, prove it.' We joined in conversation; —you know the rest.—I fell!"

The

The effort overwhelmed him, and he ſunk upon his pillow totally exhauſted.

A conſiderable time elapſed before he had ſtrength to utter another ſyllable. I intreated him to compoſe his mind, and to perſevere in that conſcious ſelf-correction, which would be his ſureſt ſafeguard in every future ſcene of worldly trial. He feebly articulated his grateful acknowledgments; and, after he had ſwallowed ſome light nouriſhment, he endeavoured to take that reſt, of which deſpair had, during the preceding night, entirely deprived him. Previous to his dropping aſleep, he requeſted that in the courſe of the day I would write a letter to his mother. I promiſed; and taking up a book which lay in the chamber, ſeated myſelf near the window to await a ſecond viſit from the ſurgeon, whom I had deſired again to examine his wound, before the expiration of twelve hours.

The

The ſtory of the young criminal ſtrongly intereſted my feelings; while more than half his load of guilt ſeemed to devolve on his hardened accomplice. My reflection naturally turned towards the gaming-table; the vortex of deſtruction, the nurſery of vice, the ſchool of licentiouſneſs: and I ſhuddered to remember that a propenſity which degrades even a maſculine education, ſhould be ſo unbluſhingly adopted and exerciſed by thoſe lovely and once feminine beings in whom profligacy appears with tenfold deformity.

Half the calamities which have befallen me through my journey of affliction, I may attribute to the gaming-table;—myſelf only once an actor in the ſombre ſcene of ſhuffling and deception, yet doomed for ever to be a mourning ſpectator of its fatal conſequences.

The

The invalid fell into a profound ſleep, from which he was awakened by a ſecond viſit from the ſurgeon, who came to examine his wound. The ſymptoms were alarming: his fever was high, and his converſation evinced ſtrong marks of increaſing delirium. I attended the unbinding of his wound, and the comments which followed diſtreſſed me infinitely.

"The ball was aimed with extraordinary malignity," ſaid the ſurgeon. "It might have penetrated a more mortal part, but none that could inflict ſeverer torture. I apprehend that the gentleman was wounded by a footpad. The landlord informed me ſo on our way from Bath."

I made no reply. Indeed I could not contradict the aſſertion, without declaring the criminality of my imprudent and agonized victim.

The ſurgeon, after a ſhort pauſe, continued:—"I have ſeen this gentleman frequently, during the laſt ſeaſon, at Bath; I recollect his countenance perfectly; and I adviſe you, Sir, if you are his friend, to diſpatch a meſſenger with an account of his precarious ſituation, to his neareſt connections: I really cannot anſwer for his life twelve hours."

My blood crept cold through every vein:—a ſenſation undeſcribably horrible poſſeſſed my mind, and I looked towards the bed with the moſt painful compunction. Every deep-fetched ſigh, every half-ſtifled groan which iſſued from his tortured boſom, wrung the fibres of my heart: I would gladly have exchanged ſituations with the ſufferer; and even envied him the opening proſpect of a peaceful grave. Alas, Roſanna! it was more than common pity that occaſioned theſe emotions:—ſympathy,—inſtinctive affection,—the terror

ror of ſomething fatally intereſting, and ſtill unknown, ſeized on my ſenſes:—I was ſtrangely, wildly poſſeſſed, by fear and ſolicitude. The ſurgeon departed. I once more approached the bed, and undrawing the curtains, fixed my gaze on the pale features of the object before me. A tear ſtarted from my eyes;—I did not bluſh at my weakneſs; it was the voluntary ſenſation of pure and irreſiſtible nature. -

I frequently inquired the young highwayman's name, but no perſon in the family would ſatisfy my curioſity. Before evening his fever augmented; his countenance changed, and his voice became ſo feeble, that the few incoherent words which he uttered were ſcarcely audible. I concluded that he could not ſurvive many hours; and the idea of ſeeing him expire was too terrible to be ſupported. After watching him till paſt midnight, and finding him every moment grow

worſe

worſe and worſe, I requeſted honeſt Ned to lend me his brown nag, in order that I might immediately ſet out for Bath: the landlord readily complied, and we repaired to the ſtable to ſaddle him for my expedition.

"Ah, maſter!" cried my hoſt of the Black Lion, "young 'ſquire has made but a very ſorry buſineſs on't! He will die as ſure as my name's Ned; and, what is worſt of all, I'm afeard I ſhall have the expence of burying him, and doctor's bill to pay into the bargain. Ah, your honour! 'tis no wonder that doctors live by other people's dying; they have all the game in their own hands, and dead men tell no tales, as one may ſay. There is always miſchief when doctor's in the wind;—for, as the old ſaying goes, 'tis an *ill* wind that blows nobody *good*.' But as I was a-telling you, I'm afeard 'ſquire is not long for this world,—and when he takes leave of us,

who's to pay piper? He can't lie above-ground."

"'Tis a pity you ever took him in as a lodger," ſaid I.

"Why, your honour, I take in every body that comes to my houſe. The pooreſt higgler that ſtops at my door, walks away lighter than a-comes; and the greateſt lords often go to worſe houſes, or they are belied moſt confoundedly. Ah, your honour! it was that curſed Jezabel Lady Delver that brought young 'ſquire to ſhame. A poor body would be whipped from pariſh to pariſh, for a leſs matter than quality does every day in the year. 'Squire will be off as ſure as a gun, your honour."

"I hope not," ſaid I; "though I confeſs that the ſymptoms are at preſent alarming."

"Your honour will have but a diſmal ride on't," cried the landlord, leaning

ing on the back of his brown nag, and looking more diſcontentedly than uſual. "The ſky is as dark as pitch, and the wind blows a hurricane. You muſt croſs our heath, and along by caſtle-wall, before you get into the weſtern road; and a more ſolitary place isn't to be met with in the whole county. Lord bleſs'e, your honour, how you would ſtare if you was but to hear the comical ſtories our country-folks tell about a murder, and two ghoſts that walk there—who but they—as frightful as may be!"

"I do not believe in tales of ſuperſtition," ſaid I; "they are the mere inventions of ignorance and fear:—a legion of ghoſts ſhould not prevent my paſſing the heath, or the caſtle-wall, in caſe I was inclined to do either.—Evil ſpirits are every day growing ſo common, that we meet them in all ſocieties."

 "Sure!"

"Sure!" cried the landlord. "And why dont'e try to pray um into the Red Sea?"

"Prayers are out of faſhion, honeſt Ned," anſwered I. "The evil ſpirits I ſpeak of ſet religion at defiance."

"Sure!—But this ghoſt, which I was a-ſpeaking of, is for all the world like a ſperit," cried the landlord, looking fearfully round him. "Parſon hinted ſomewhat about it in pulpit laſt Midſummer-eve: for a ſaid that ſperits of darkneſs walked upon the face of the earth. We all knew well enough what a meant; and ſince that day the ſtouteſt-hearted be rather timerſome about going over heath, or near caſtle-walls, with the devil at their heels, as one may ſay. Shall I tell you the hiſtory about Ghoſt and Grey doublet? a walks always, ſo country-folks ſay, when 'tis as dark as pitch!—Bad deeds always come to light, your honour."

The

The landlord proceeded to ſaddle his brown nag while he related the ſtory, which, in a leiſure hour, I ſince verſified as follows:

THE DOUBLET OF GREY.

I.

Beneath the tall turrets that nod o'er the dell,
A dark foreſt now blackens the mound;
Where often, at dawn-light, the deep-ſounding bell
Tolls ſadly and ſolemn a ſoul-parting knell,
While the ruin re-echoes the ſound.

II.

Yet long has the caſtle been left to decay,
For its ramparts are ſkirted with thorn;
And no one by moonlight will venture that way,
Leſt they meet the poor maid, in her doublet of grey,
As ſhe wanders, all pale and forlorn!

III.

"And why ſhould ſhe wander? O tell me, I pray,
"And, oh! why does ſhe wander alone?"
Beneath the dark ivy, now left to decay,
With no ſhroud, but a coarſe ſimple doublet of grey,
Lies her boſom as cold as a ſtone.

IV.

Time was when no form was ſo freſh, or ſo fair,
Or ſo comely, when richly array'd:
She was tall, and the jewels that blaz'd in her hair
Could no more with her eye's living luſtre compare,
Than a roſe with the cheek of the maid.

V.

She lov'd!—but the youth, who had vanquiſh'd her heart,
Was the heir of a peaſant's hard toil;
For no treaſure had he: yet, a ſtranger to art,
He would oft by a look to the damſel impart
What the damſel receiv'd with a ſmile.

VI.

Whene'er to the wake or the chace ſhe wou'd go,
The young Theodore loiter'd that way;
Did the ſun-beams of ſummer invitingly glow,
Or acroſs the bleak common the winter winds blow,
Still he watch'd till the cloſing of day.

VII.

Her parents ſo wealthy, her kindred ſo proud,
Heard the ſtory of love with diſmay;
They rav'd, and they ſtorm'd, by the Virgin they vow'd,
That, before they would ſee her ſo wedded, a ſhroud
Should be Madeline's bridal array.

One

VIII.

One night, it was winter, all dreary and cold,
And the moon-beams ſhone paly and clear;
When ſhe open'd her lattice, in hopes to behold
Her Theodore's form, when the turret-bell toll'd,
And the blood in her heart froze with fear.

IX.

Near the green-mantled moat her ſtern father ſhe ſpied,
And a grave he was making with ſpeed;
The light, which all ſilver'd the caſtle's ſtrong ſide,
Diſplay'd his wild geſtures, while madly he cry'd—
"Curſed caitiff! thy boſom ſhall bleed!"

X.

Diſtracted, forlorn, from the caſtle of pride,
She eſcap'd at the next cloſe of day,
Her ſoft-bluſhing cheek, with dark berries all dy'd,
With a ſpear on her ſhoulder, a ſword by her ſide,
And her form in *a doublet of grey*.

XI.

She travers'd the courts, not a vaſſal was ſeen,
Through the gate, hung with ivy, ſhe flew:
The ſky was unclouded, the air was ſerene,
The moon ſhot its rays, the long viſtas between,
And her doublet was ſpangled with dew.

XII.

O'er the cold breezy downs to the hamlet ſhe hied,
Where the cottage of Theodore ſtood;
For its low roof of ruſhes ſhe oft had deſcried,
When ſhe drank of the brook that foam'd wild by its ſide,
While the keen hunters travers'd the wood.

XIII.

The ſky on a ſudden grew dark, and the wind,
With a deep ſullen murmur, ruſh'd by;
She wander'd about, but no path cou'd ſhe find,
While horrors on horrors encompaſs'd her mind
When ſhe found that no ſhelter was nigh.

XIV.

And now, on the dry wither'd fern, ſhe cou'd hear
The hoofs of ſwift horſes rebound;
She ſtopp'd and ſhe liſten'd, ſhe trembled with fear,
When a voice moſt prophetic and ſad met her ear,
And ſhe ſhudder'd and ſhrunk at the ſound.

XV.

"'Tis here we will wait," cry'd the horſeman; "for-
"ſee
"How the moon with black clouds is o'erſpread;
"No hut yields a ſhelter, no foreſt a tree—
"This heath ſhall young Theodore's bridal-couch be,
"And the cold earth ſhall pillow his head.
"Hark!

XVI.

" Hark! ſome one approaches:—now ſtand we aſide,
" We ſhall know him—for ſee, the moon's clear;
" In a doublet of grey he now waits for his bride,
" But, ere dawn-light, the Carle ſhall repent of his pride,
" And his pale mangled body reſt here."

XVII.

Again, the moon ſhrouded in clouds, o'er the plain-
The horſemen were ſcatter'd far wide;
The night became ſtormy, the faſt falling rain
Beat hard on her boſom, which dar'd not complain,
And the torrent roll'd ſwift by her ſide.

XVIII.

Now claſhing of ſwords overwhelm'd her with dread,
While her ear met the deep-groan of death;
" Yield, yield thee, bold peaſant," the murderer ſaid,
" This turf with thy heart's deareſt blood ſhall be red,
" And thy bones whiten over the heath."

XIX.

Now ſhrieking, deſpairing, ſhe ſtarts from the ground,
And her ſpear, with new ſtrength, ſhe let's go:
She aim'd it at random, ſhe felt it rebound
From the ſure hand of Fate, which inflicted the wound,
As it drank the life-blood of her foe.

XX.

The morning advanced, o'er the pale chilling ſkies
Soon the warm roſy tints circled wide;
But, oh God! with what anguiſh, what terror ſhe flies,
When her father, all cover'd with wounds, ſhe deſcries
With her lover's pale corpſe by his ſide!

XXI.

Half frantic ſhe fell on her parent's cold breaſt,
And ſhe bath'd her white boſom with gore;
Then, in anguiſh the form of young Theodore preſs'd—
"I will yet be thy bride, in the grave we will reſt,"
She exclaim'd; and ſhe ſuffer'd no more.

XXII.

Now o'er the wild heath when the winter winds blow,
And the moon-ſilver'd fern branches wave,
Pale Theodore's ſpectre is ſeen gliding ſlow,
As he calls on the damſel in accents of woe,
Till the bell warns him back to his grave.

XXIII.

And while the deep ſound echoes over the wood,
Now the villagers ſhrink with diſmay;
For, as legends declare, where the caſtle once ſtood,
Mid the ruins, by moonlight, all cover'd with blood,
Shrieks the maid—in *her doublet of grey!*

CHAP. LXII.

THE landlord having ſaddled the brown nag, I once more repaired to the chamber where the young highwayman lay to all appearance expiring. I addreſſed him ſeveral times, and as he made me no anſwer, I concluded that he was incapable of ſpeaking. I touched his cheek—it was cold; and the damp of death gliſtened on his forehead.

It was impoſſible to deſcribe what I felt at that moment—The criminal had ſo much to urge in extenuation of his conduct; and I knew by fatal experience how eaſily unſuſpecting minds are entrapped by the ſubtilty of the vicious, that I almoſt conſidered myſelf as culpable in having deprived of exiſtence a being who might have reformed, and

become a valuable member of ſociety. Three times I cloſed the curtains, and three times again opened them, to take a laſt look at the unfortunate ſufferer; but I found that the longer I contemplated his pale and diſtorted features, the more my reſolution ſeemed to diminiſh. I therefore, with a painful effort, quitted the room, and deſcended to the kitchen.

The landlord again adviſed me to delay my journey till the morning: "I don't know why," ſaid he, "but ſomehow I have a ſtrange foreboding that you'll never get ſafe to Bath. The weather is ſtormy, and the rain pours in torrents; one wou'dn't turn a dog out on ſuch a night, much leſs your honour. I would no more think of croſſing our heath than of flying; and I'm none of your faint-hearted ones neither."

"What ſhould moleſt me?" ſaid I; for I began to ſuſpect that honeſt Ned knew

knew of more wanderers on the heath than thoſe which the ſtory of the ghoſt had diſcovered.

"Why, that's more than I can ſay," replied the landlord. "'Tis a loneſome road, and there isn't a ſtar to be ſeen from eaſt to weſt, as one may ſay. Only hark how the wind whiſtles! This is a rare night for ghoſts and witches, and ſuch like gentry. I'll warrant all the old women in the pariſh are at this moment telling frightful ſtories round their fire-ſides, about goblins, and fairies, and murders.—You had better ſtay and drink a tankard of our ale, your honour. Zooks, how the chimnies rattle!—Why, the very caſements will be beat in by the hail and the rain! Well, this is a night! Why, I queſtion whether there has been ſuch another in the memory of man!"

"The tempeſt is too violent to laſt long," ſaid I: "before I have croſſed the

the heath it will be over. I am uſed to ſtorms and accuſtomed to difficulties.—The rain and hail will not hurt me."

"Ah, your honour!" replied the landlord, ſhaking his wiſe head, "there is nothing ſo dangerous as being foolhardy. If young 'ſquire had but followed my advice, he wou'dn't have been in ſuch a terrible plight, as one may ſay. Howſomedever, if you be determined to brave both the wind and the weather, we will take one more tankard before you go."

"With all my heart," anſwered I; "but you muſt bring it directly."

"What ſay you to a few eggs in it, and a little nutmeg?"

"Very well; be it ſo."

"It will reliſh a raſher; and a drop of brandy added will keep the cold out of your ſtomach."

"Be expeditious then," ſaid I; "for time flies rapidly."

"Fair

"Fair and ſoftly," cried the landlord; "he ſtumbles that runs faſt, as one may ſay."

He now took his lantern, and croſſing the ſtable-yard to his beer-cellar, a ſudden guſt of wind blew open the door, and extinguiſhed the candle. The landlord returned:——"Moſt haſte, worſe ſpeed," cried he, again placing the light in the lantern, and ſallying forth with his tankard towards the cellar. In a few minutes he came back.—"Good Lord! this is a night indeed!" exclaimed he—"The tiles are flying from the roof—who but they? and the trees in our barton crack and ruſtle as though they were torn up by the very roots! I warrant the ruins of the old caſtle are making a fine rumpus: there won't be one ſtone left a-top of t'other! Lord a mercy! my blood runs cold to think on't! ſuch a hurley-burley was never before heard

in

in the heavens! You cannot think of travelling till things be a little quiet."

The ale being ready, I took a draught from the tankard; and after giving the landlord a ſum ſufficient to defray the funeral expences of the dying man, mounted the brown nag, while his maſter held the bridle, and with many earneſt intreaties would have diſſuaded me from my purpoſe.

"Mercy on us! how the doors clap! what a night is this to travel! Only but look at the ſky! Why the heath ſeems for all the world like a grave!—one can't ſee one's hand before one. Well, he that's born to be hanged will never be drowned; but ſuch a deluge of rain did I never ſee in all my born days. I ſuppoſe you know the way; mind you don't run foul of gibbet—or tumble into marle-pits—And take heed you don't get up to hill among the ruins;

you'll be finely maz'd if you ben't careful."

I was juſt ſetting off when honeſt Ned called to me, and deſired that I would ſtop half a minute, "Take another draught," ſaid he, "and let's drink to your ſafe journey."

I thanked him, but declined drinking any more; "Your good wiſhes are the ſame," ſaid I, ſhaking his hand, as he finiſhed the tankard.

"The wind cuts like a razor!" cried honeſt Ned; "I can hardly find in my heart to let you go after all; for, give the devil his due, your honour is a worthy gentleman."

The old woman now came hobbling towards us—"For God's ſake, maſter, go up to poor young 'ſquire," ſaid ſhe.

I gueſſed the cauſe of her ſudden alarm; I inſtantly, ſpurring my horſe, broke from the landlord; and as well as the

the darkneſs would permit, haſtened acroſs the common.

Never did the landlord ſpeak more truly than when he declared that ſuch a night was ſcarcely to be remembered. But my thoughts were too intently fixed on paſt events to dread or regard the approach of future calamities. The rain, which had been inceſſantly falling ſince twilight, had nearly inundated a great part of the heath, and I was obliged to proceed at a foot-pace till I reached a narrow lane; I knew, by the preſſure of my horſe's hoofs, that I was on a gravel-beaten road; the ſplaſhy turf rendering the ſound wholly different. Still I advanced, and ſtill the tempeſt howled on every ſide. I could perceive, by the poſition of my ſaddle, that we were on an acclivity, and I was ruminating on the ſtory of Madeline with her doublet of grey, when on a ſudden

ſudden a bell tolled, and I ſtarted from my reverie to liſten.

Again the ſolemn vibration mingled with the blaſt, as it roſe and fell in its progreſs over the common. I ſtopped my horſe: the ſingularity of my ſituation cauſed a momentary thrilling through my heart. The bell continued to toll, and the ſtorm yelled more furiouſly than ever. I began to wiſh I had followed the wiſe counſel of honeſt Ned, and was about to turn my horſe, and retrace my dreary path, when I perceived a dim light advancing over the heath at more than a hundred yards diſtant from the place where I ſtopped. It moved ſlowly—I ſhuddered! A painful ſenſation, which has never failed to inform me with prophetic horror, when any event nearly intereſted my feelings, at that moment chilled my breaſt. I ſpurred my horſe, and, with a forced and deſperate reſolution,

tion, haſtened towards the light, with as much ſpeed as the roads and the ſituation would permit me.

As I approached the flame, which continued to move onward, ſometimes dimmed by torrents pouring from the ſky, which not a ſingle ſtar illumined, and at others glaring, as the wind fanned it into new vigour, I obſerved ſomething white gliding after it.

Conjecture now became almoſt bewildered; and I reſolved to convince myſelf by what means ſuch an appearance, at ſuch an hour, and in a place ſo lonely, could be produced. On approaching the ſpot, I diſcovered a hearſe drawn by ſix horſes, and ornamented with plumes of white feathers. At that moment the torch, which an attendant carried before the horſes to light their way, by a keen and hurrying blaſt of wind, was ſuddenly extinguiſhed. The cavalcade halted, and I ſtopped to recover

ver from the ſurpriſe which it had, in ſpite of all my reſolution, occaſioned.

CHAP. LXIII.

I ARRESTED my ſteps beſide the gloomy cavalcade, and during many minutes had not power to proceed on my journey. The recollection of the ſtate in which I had left the highwayman, and the idea that he was then a corpſe, made me ſhudder while I contemplated the pompous proceſſion before me.

The dawn began faintly to break, and the dim duſky light rendered the ſurrounding ſcenery doubly ſolitary. I looked, awfully impreſſed, acroſs the heath; the furze and fern were in many places inundated by the heavy and long-continued fall of rain. The wind was

leſs

leſs boiſterous than it had been on my leaving the Black Lion: but the chains, which were rivetted round the human ſcare-crow ſuſpended from the gibbet, filled up the pauſe with a creeking ſound, which inſpired the mind with a mixture of melancholy and horror, that was undeſcribable. I ſtopped for a moment to gaze on the wretched remnant of mortality, parched by the wind and withered by the ſun, while the keen blaſt blew it from ſide to ſide, when the bell again vibrated through the air, and fixed my attention. I inſtantly turned towards the quarter from whence the ſolemn ſound proceeded, and obſerved, by the grey morning light, the ivy-covered turrets of an ancient village church, juſt viſible above the wood, whoſe ruined caſtle my landlord had ſo minutely and ſuperſtitiouſly deſcribed. One-half the myſtery of the maid in her

grey

grey doublet was now elucidated; and I well knew that a ſtory of ſupernatural horror requires only a ſombre outline, which time, and the inventive powers of the human mind, will not fail to fill up with the marvellous and terrific.

" 'Tis well that day begins to break," cried the ſable torch-bearer; " for we ſhould have been finely bewildered before we got to Devizes: ſince the faſhion of travelling by night has been taken up by the nobility, there is no reſt for us gentlemen of the ſcarf and hat-band."

" Suppoſe they cannot travel by day," ſaid the other, " what's to be done then? Beſides, we need not grumble; for 'tis well known that we make them pay for it in the end."

" And a pretty end they make," added his companion. " There's more fuſs about one titled carcaſe, than about twenty wholeſome bodies. But all trades muſt

muſt thrive; and half the great folks we convey home are better dead than living."

"How do you make that out?" cried the gloomy inquirer.

"Why, becauſe many of them live ill, and die well," replied the torch-bearer: "now a poor raſcal proves his removal from high blood by the very reverſe; for he generally lives well and dies ill. Yet I dare be ſworn that yon gibbet bears an honeſter man than this ſame corpſe of a lord was in his beſt days."

"He has left but a queer name behind him," ſaid the undertaker.

"No matter for that," replied his companion; "money will buy ſome folks a character; and I'll warrant his name will be mended, before it appears in our abbey."

"Money!" cried the undertaker—"why he died worſe than nothing."

"That was one degree worſe than himſelf," interrupted the torch-bearer—"But your nobles have ſeldom much to boaſt of, except the title which they get from their anceſtors, and which goes on to their next heir, with little improvement, and ſtill leſs honour. Why your lords, now-a-days, only ſquander their eſtates at the gaming-table; and while they hang a poor thief for taking a purſe on the highway, make no more of picking one another's pockets, than I ſhould do of conſigning their bones to the hands of the anatomiſt."

"You don't do ſo much in that way as you formerly did," cried the torch-bearer.

"The more is the pity," replied the lacquey of death; "for there is plenty of ſtuff for experimental work. Moſt of our modern bodies are terribly diſordered about the heart; a leaden ſurtout cannot add to their coldneſs, or do

away the ill effects which ſuch ſubjects leave behind them. Why my lord here, that is travelling home in our death-cart, has a coffin as thick as a ſtone-wall. But lead is no uncommon thing for the heads of great families."

"You are merry, my ſlow travellers," ſaid I.

"And yet we have but a ſad ſubject for our mirth," replied the undertaker.

"It is a pity that the corpſe which excites your jocularity, cannot hear you," ſaid I.

"He would hear what, probably, he never heard in his life," cried the torch-bearer.

"And what is that?"

"Truth!" anſwered he. "Your court-born quality, like a certain beaſt of burden, carry their ears ſo high, that nothing like reaſon or good counſel can reach them. They think themſelves the lords of their ſpecies, and, like the aſs

aſs in the lion's ſkin, fancy the whole world is aſtoniſhed at their power, at the very moment that they are the objects of univerſal deteſtation."

"Whoſe corpſe do you bear?" ſaid I.

"Nobody's," anſwered the undertaker; "our hearſe, indeed, bears the body of Viſcount Linbourne."

"Lord Linbourne!" repeated I, ſhuddering with horror. "Is not Lord Linbourne yet buried? He has been dead theſe three weeks!"

"Very true," ſaid the undertaker; "but he forgot to pay his debts before his departure; and his body was detained for the good of his character."

"Arreſted!" cried I, with a mixture of ſurpriſe and indignation. "His miſerable remains inſulted, to gratify the revengeful malice of his creditors, and in a Chriſtian country! Shame! ſhame on thoſe laws which authorize ſuch violations of humanity."

"How you ſtare!" ſaid the torch-bearer, proceeding ſlowly on, as I walked my horſe beſide him. "Why there have been inſtances of bodies being detained for a few hundreds, which were covered with ſcars received in the defence of their country. Nay, more, I once heard of a great man's ſuffering the corpſe of a beautiful miſtreſs to lie on the bare floor, while the bed, on which ſhe died, was ſold for the benefit of her creditors *.

"Is the circumſtance common?" ſaid I.

"God forbid!" replied the train-bearer of mortality; "for if every noble corpſe, that died without paying his debts, were kept above-ground, the church-yards would ſoon be full of undertakers."

The roads were rendered ſo deep by

* True Anecdotes.

the

the torrents of rain, that the cavalcade again halted to let the horſes reſt, and I made farther inquiries reſpecting Lord Linbourne. I found that his remains had been arreſted at the ſuit of Lady Emily Delvin, for the ſum of ſix hundred pounds; that, after remaining unburied nearly three weeks, the debt was diſcharged, and the body ordered for interment by an unknown friend. The latter circumſtance ſurpriſed me more than the former. An act of perſecution from a woman of Lady Emily Delvin's deſcription was not ſufficiently ſingular to excite aſtoniſhment; but that an unknown perſon ſhould lay aſide the claim to public praiſe, and voluntarily rescue the reputation of a departed friend from diſgrace, was wonderful indeed! I did not then conceive, that the man who had evinced ſuch noble, ſuch generous ſentiments, was no other than my ill-requited patron —Colonel Aubrey!

It is impoſſible to deſcribe the reflections which followed this diſcovery.—Every proof which Colonel Aubrey gave of exalted philanthropy, ſerved as an additional ſcorpion to ſting my boſom with the anguiſh of compunction. The wretched highwayman, whom I had left that morning, appeared to my ſelf-reproving mind, comparatively innocent, when imagination wandered back through the gloomy labyrinths of time, and pointed out the events which had rapidly followed my footſteps.

I quitted the ſable group, and my mind was deeply impreſſed with the touching ſolemnity of its appearance.—I ſtopped at ſome diſtance, and looked back, for the laſt time, towards the vehicle which contained the breathleſs body of him, who, had I never breathed, might at that moment have been living. The idea was terrible! Yet the deſtruction of a diſſipated mortal—of one whoſe

whoſe life was employed in every ſpecies of tolerated fraud—who exiſted on the ſpoils of other men's credulity—and practiſed every vice with the unbluſhing effrontery of hardened infamy, was of leſs importance than the eternal wound which I had given to Colonel Aubrey's repoſe, by my raſh and unprincipled conduct towards Miſs Woodford. By the former, the world was rid of an enemy to virtue; by the latter, ſociety loſt one of its brighteſt ornaments, and the object who was not only entitled to my friendſhip, but to my unbounded gratitude.

As the ſun began to light the ſummits of the diſtant hills, the horſes moved ſlowly down a rugged ſteep, leading from the common. The ſky brightened every inſtant, and the yellow tints of the morning beams, juſt viſible above the horizon, caught the tops of the white plumes, as the hearſe deſcended to

the valley. I heard the ſound of the wheels as they proceeded from me: the rumbling diminiſhed as the diſtance augmented, till at length I was again left alone on the ſolitary waſte, doubly impreſſed with melancholy by the ſcene which I had witneſſed. I will leave you to fancy what I in reality experienced at that moment.

CHAP. LXIV.

After a few minutes, paſſed in reflections no leſs painful than unavailing, I ſpurred my horſe with a kind of impetuous deſpair, and haſtened towards Bath. On my arrival, I committed the landlord's nag to the care of a poſt-boy, with inſtructions to convey him back to his maſter by the firſt convenient opportunity;

tunity; and immediately ordered a chaiſe to take me to Briſtol.

The acute ſenſibility of my mind had ſeldom, in all its varying ſcenes of probationary ſuffering, experienced a more ſevere trial, than that of knowing myſelf the acceſſary to a murder. For, whatever the laws of honour, or the cuſtoms of ſociety, may hold forth in extenuation of the act, the man who takes the life of a fellow-creature, except in the defence of life, is guilty of murder —tolerated, ſanctioned, legal murder! I argue thus—If a man robs me of my purſe, I have no right to deſtroy him, while the laws are in full force to puniſh ſuch an outrage. If I am cheated of reputation, there are alſo legal modes of bringing my calumniator to juſtice: neither have I any right to annihilate my enemy in one caſe more than in the other. The only excuſe which human frailty can urge as a palliation of the

crime, is that ſudden and reſiſtleſs irritability, which, ruſhing before our reaſon, ſeizes on all its faculties, and claims by violence inſtantaneous vengeance. In that caſe the maniac may offer ſome plea for the man: but the cool-blooded wretch who, calmly, thinkingly prepares the means of annihilating a fellow-creature—who waits with his intellects clear, his reaſon predominant over the violence of his paſſions, to deſtroy a being, who has, perhaps, in a moment of levity offended, is little better than an aſſaſſin; and as ſuch ſhould be avoided by every friend to religion and ſociety.

While the horſes were harneſſing, I ſtrolled towards the North Parade; and the firſt perſons I met were the Ducheſs of Riversford with her daughters, accompanied by Lady Amaranth and the Duke of Heartwing. As I advanced to join them, they turned from me with an air of inſolent contempt, which wounded my

my pride, and at the ſame time rouſed my indignation. At a loſs how to notice ſuch conduct without expoſing myſelf to ridicule, for I did not know that people of rank had their days of acknowledgment and their days of total forgetfulneſs, I entered the Library, and, taking up one of the London newſpapers, began to read. The arrogant group ſoon followed, and, as is the cuſtom with high-bred females, endeavoured to look me into ſubmiſſion—watching my eyes till they encountered theirs, and then ſuddenly turning with a diſdainful ſneer towards ſome other object.

The Library was crowded with unlettered triflers; and every new publication was demanded with an avidity which human politeneſs had ſcarcely time to obey. Plays, pamphlets, novels, magazines, and reviews were handed round, and as quickly, with their leaves unopened, returned to the librarian.

"I am grown to hate novels," cried the ducheſs; "the ſentimental parts make one melancholy; and the intrigue, which is the only thing that enlivens them, preſents nothing but what we all know. Were I to write a book of that kind, I would pourtray my hero from nature.—He ſhould be a ſolemn pedant without an atom of knowledge, and a man of the world wholly educated in obſcurity."

"How ridiculous!" cried Lady Arabella—"I am ſure you cannot call that a portrait from nature."

"Exactly! abſolutely from life!" replied the ducheſs, looking towards me. "My *hero!* methinks I ſee my *hero!*"

"But your portrait is full of contradictions," ſaid Lady Amaranth.

"Therefore the female world will commend it through ſympathy," added the duke.

"Well,

"Well, I like my character of all things: I think it perfect," ſaid the ducheſs.

"Your Grace is ſingular in your opinion," retorted Lady Amaranth.—"Now, were I to draw a ſketch from nature, I would ſelect ſome wild uncultivated boy, who ſhould be a being of my own creating."

"Nobody queſtions your ladyſhip's ſtrength of colouring," ſaid the ducheſs; "and as far as experience goes, your chance of ſucceſs is flattering. But the hero of a novel is not ſo eaſily delineated. I deteſt thoſe mawkiſh, love-ſick animals, who move with unintereſting rapidity through the ſlender pages of manufactured volumes, produced by the grinding brains of illiterate matrons, for the benefit of the riſing generation.—Give me a Werter, or a St. Preux, nay, even a Lovelace, or a Tom Jones; any thing but a Lord Wou'd-be-good or a Count

Count Never-wrong. I read a work of this kind the other day, on my journey, merely to beguile time; it was freſh from a modern novel-mill, and ſtrongly recommended by the reviewers; but judge of my ſurpriſe, when I diſcovered whole pages about tinder-boxes and potatoes!—the former without power to kindle a ſpark of animation—and the latter more unpalatable than moral admonition to a practiſed gameſter."

The young ladies began to giggle; Lady Amaranth bluſhed deep vermilion.

"Indeed," added the ducheſs, "there was one excuſe for the writer, for ſhe avowed her own incapacity, in the preface to her work, and candidly declared that ſhe had not the fainteſt hope of entertaining her friends. It would be well if all old women were equally honeſt."

Lady Amaranth, in order to draw the attention of the circle from herſelf, and

to

to fix it wholly on me, whiſpered—"'Tis the ſame—don't you recollect him?"

Still I glanced over the columns of the newſpaper, and endeavoured to arm my pride againſt the impertinence of folly. But human reſolution is not permitted to oppoſe the omnipotence of faſhion; and thoſe whom its leading idols do not condeſcend to applaud, they ſeldom fail to perſecute. The amiable junto, whoſe pleaſure it was at that moment to torment me, taking their chairs near the door, began the attack; while I, unable to eſcape, for they had completely blocked up the paſſage, was condemned to ſeek for amuſement in the literary repoſitory.

Finding that their plan of humiliation ſeemed to loſe its ſubduing qualities, they began to fear that looks would not accompliſh their purpoſe; and the next auxiliary called in to aid them, was that doubtful, teazing, ambiguous, buzzing thing—

thing—a Whiſper; with all its accompaniments of ſhrugs, ſmiles, upraiſed eyes, ſidelong glances, and oblique ejaculations calculated to excite curioſity and inflict mortification. I indiſtinctly heard them pronounce me a murderer, an impoſtor, a libertine, and a highwayman; yet, though urged on by inſults, ſtigmatized by falſe reports, perſecuted by overbearing arrogance, my pride, reputation, happineſs, and forbearance attacked without mercy, and ſacrificed without remorſe, I had no remedy—becauſe my aſſailants were perſons of diſtinction!

The Duke of Heartwing, either aſhamed of his aſſociates, or fearful that their comments might produce unpleaſant conſequences, drew nearer and nearer towards the door; and without making the ſlighteſt ſignal of an adieu, in a few moments ſuddenly vaniſhed. From that period the fair phalanx ſeemed

to ſlacken in reſolution. Their eyes were permitted to wander over the various objects which the library preſented, and Lady Amaranth riſing to borrow the laſt edition of "Liberal Opinions," a break was made in the circle, which was ſoon followed by a complete deſertion. I now quitted my ſeat, and was advancing towards the interior of the library, in order to return the paper which I had borrowed, when I heard Lady Amaranth aſk the librarian whether he knew me. "Take care," ſaid ſhe, "how far you hold any intercourſe with him, for he is a very dangerous character."

"I have ſeen him with Colonel Aubrey, and think your ladyſhip muſt be miſtaken," ſaid the librarian.

"Not at all," replied Lady Amaranth, "he is ſuſpected of having robbed Lady Emily Delvin. How he eſcaped puniſhment Heaven only knows."

"It

"It cannot be the ſame," ſaid a ſenſible-looking man, who ſtood near her ladyſhip; "and, on mere ſurmiſe, it is barbarous to calumniate."

"Nobody knows him," ſaid Lady Amaranth.

"He is the more entitled to protection from ſtrangers," ſaid the liberal obſerver.

"Who is this man?" inquired Lady Amaranth, in a loud whiſper, at the ſame time fixing a vacant ſtare on my voluntary advocate.

"Mr. Melmoth," replied the librarian; "the author of many excellent and beautiful productions! a man equally diſtinguiſhed for genius, and claſſical acquirements, as for the urbanity of his mind, and the excellent qualities of his heart!"

"I ſhould like to read the productions of ſo extraordinary a character," cried Lady Amaranth. "I do not remember

member having met ſuch a one in the circles of faſhion."

"Moſt likely not," ſaid Mr. Type, bowing reſpectfully.

"That modeſty which is the aſſociate of genius, obtrudes not itſelf on thoſe who are incapable of appreciating its value," ſaid I.

Mr. Melmoth drew back to an obſcure part of the library. Lady Amaranth continued:—

"Give me one of his works; I ſhall want ſomething to amuſe me in the bath to-morrow morning."

"Your ladyſhip has already ſelected one; 'Liberal Opinions.'"

"O! Gothic! out of date as much as though it had been printed before the flood! Who will pretend to recommend ſuch antediluvian things as liberal opinions?"

"The Tutor of Truth."

"Worſe!

"Worſe!—a thouſand times worſe! I would not read ſuch pages to be crowned with wreathes of myrtle. Has he written nothing more ſuited to the faſhionable world?"

"Family Secrets."

"O Heaven! whoſe?—Any body's that I know? Delightful!—charming!—give me the firſt volume,—I will not ſleep till I have read it. Are any of my friends in it?—Full of anecdote I dare ſay.—What a clever creature!—I hope he does not mention me.—I never heard ſo exquiſite a title.—You muſt preſent him to me. I never was acquainted with any author, except the Marchioneſs of Baramberg, and ſhe is ſo vain of her talents, that there is no bearing her."

"She has a right to be proud of that which nature has marked with ſuch intrinſic value," ſaid I. "She is a rare example of exalted beauty, exhibiting the honours

honours of illuſtrious birth, as her ſecondary claims to the meed of admiration: Her wit, vivacity, accompliſhments, and liberal mind, would, in any country except England, render her an object of univerſal idolatry! and it is to be lamented that ſhe ſhould waſte her days in the circles of ignorance and envy, while her rank, and, what I reſpect beyond all adventitious claims, her talents, would place her in that ſphere, elſewhere, which would give celebrity to genius, and dignity to the moſt exalted ſituation."

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Melmoth, whoſe breaſt never failed to beat with generous joy, when merit and talents were the ſubjects of panegyric. His energetic manner and voice pleaſed me;—and, in a moment, I fancied myſelf his old acquaintance. There was ſomething like congeniality of opinion, which demanded my attention; and who could ſo eloquently

quently impreſs the mind with eſteem and admiration, as that being, who faſtens on the heart by the reſiſtleſs claims of "*ſympathy?*"

CHAP. LXV.

A PAUSE of ſome moments was interrupted by the return of the Duke of Heartwing. Lady Amaranth flew to meet him, and inſtantly taking his arm, led him towards the interior of the library, where ſhe recommenced her buz of calumny with a new artillery of inquiſitive glances. I was preparing to depart, when the idea of flying like a deſpicable coward arreſted my ſteps, and chained me to the ſcene of action.

The duke returned to the part of the ſhop where I ſtill loitered, and with a tone

a tone of lordly impertinence cried, "Pray don't I know you?"

"That is more than I can anſwer," ſaid I, careleſsly. "Of one thing I can be certain at leaſt, that I *know* your Grace."

"And what may you know of me?" inquired the duke, taking out his ſnuff-box, and advancing a few ſteps towards me.

"That which if you knew yourſelf, would no longer be your characteriſtic."

"Will you do me the honour to explain your words, for the edification of this charming circle?" ſaid his Grace, with a ſupercilious ſneer that irritated my feelings.

I am under too many obligations to the Ducheſs, and Lady Amaranth, to deny them ſo ſmall a favour," anſwered I.

"O! pray let us hear his Grace's characteriſtic," ſaid Lady Arabella, "for I never

I never knew that the Duke had ſtrength of mind to evince any!"

"Sir, I deſire your explanation," ſaid his Grace of Heartwing, "for I never permit people who are not of my ſociety to take liberties with my name."

"I dare ſay not," anſwered I, "if you can prevent them. But it is a buſy prying world; and thoſe who are placed on an eminence, ſhould be cautious how they excite the curioſity of mankind."

"Who dares call my conduct in queſtion?" demanded his Grace, growing red with anger.

"Few will take that trouble, my Lord," anſwered I, "though many will preſume to obſerve it. The moſt profound philoſophers have been known to watch and examine the labours of an inſect."

"Now for my characteriſtic," cried his Grace, in a menacing tone.

" Arrogance!"

" Puppy," murmured the Duke.

" Pride!" added I contemptuouſly.

" Inſolent coxcomb!" faintly articulated the man of titles.

" Folly and inſignificance!" ſaid I calmly. " Now, my Lord Duke, are you ſatisfied?"

His Grace, turning towards the Ducheſs, muttered, " But that he is a vulgar dog, and beneath my reſentment, I would cruſh him to atoms."

" The fly cannot cruſh the lion," ſaid I, " though he may vex and ſting him."

" Well! I proteſt there is ſomething vaſtly comical in that remark!" cried Lady Arabella. " I love lions of all things. They are ſuch powerful creatures, and at the ſame time ſo noble! I ſhould like monſtrouſly to have a young cub, to educate after my own faſhion; only I ſhould be afraid he would

love me ſo well, that, ſome day or other, he would take it into his head to eat me, and that would be vaſtly ſhocking and wonderfully ſavage! would it not?"

"Our ſweet poet, Spencer, repreſents the lion as incapable of offending beauty," ſaid I.

"O!" exclaimed Lady Arabella, "I remember having the ſtory painted on my fan. Una! the gentle, lovely Una! You have read then?"

The Ducheſs would have frowned her pretty epitome into ſilence. But, young as Lady Arabella was, ſhe had already learnt to aſſert the privilege of her ſex, and with infinite good-humour again addreſſed me:

"Well," ſaid ſhe, "after all, books are delicious things, though we are ſo apt to neglect them. I wonder whether there will be any books in another century. It would be monſtrous comical if they ſhould be totally exploded."

"Heaven

"Heaven forbid!" ſaid I, "that man, ſo recently enlightened, ſhould again degenerate into ignorance; and, by cloſing the avenues to reaſon, recommence the reign of tyranny and ſuperſtition."

"Well, I confeſs," cried Lady Arabella, "that I ſhould like of all things to peep out of my grave, and ſee what my great-grand-children are doing; I dare ſay affairs will be monſtrouſly changed: men will make caps and puff ribbands; and women forget their ſex, to box and ride races."

"There would be little novelty in the former," interrupted the Duke, "for the men-milliners already furniſh the abodes of gallantry with more fine women than ever embelliſhed a Grand Seignior's ſeraglio! We *connoiſſeurs* in the article of beauty have innumerable cauſes to commend the innovation; for were the young and the attractive employed in the old-faſhioned occupations

of their ſex, we ſhould be half ruined in the purſuit of elegant intrigue."

"You are monſtrouſly ſcurrilous!" cried Lady Arabella; "and I cannot think how ſo ſavage a creature ever came to be ſo popular in the circles of refinement."

"Becauſe he is an adept in deception," anſwered the Ducheſs. "Congeniality, in many inſtances, proves the ſtrongeſt magnet of attraction."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed the Duke, "I ſpeak nothing but mere matter of fact. Plebeian beauty has long overſtocked the markets of intrigue, and is now become ſo plenty that it is of little value. But when a ſtar ſhines forth in the higher ſphere of faſhion, every eye is fixed upon it, and every boſom beats to baſk in its effulgence. But thoſe who will ſoar, muſt pay dearly for their pinions. Aſk my friend Lord Liberal whether his attentions to Lady Penny-

leſs

leſs have not coſt him a good twenty thouſand! and did not a ſhort excurſion to the continent diminiſh the coffers of a noble dupe, to the tune of nearly that ſum."

"That, nobody will credit," ſaid Lady Amaranth.

"Except his banker," interrupted Lady Arabella.

"If elegant beauty is ſo dearly purchaſed, how does your Grace arrange your affairs of gallantry?" ſaid the Ducheſs. "A liberal heart is not one of your moſt prominent characteriſtics."

"I import beauty as I do wine," anſwered his Grace; "it comes to me free of duty, from a country where it is no longer ſaleable."

Lady Arabella now took up a volume of "The Pupil of Pleaſure."—"What a monſtrous pretty title!" cried her ladyſhip; "I ſhould like vaſtly to read this

book; one may learn ſomething worth knowing. Pray, Mr. Ainsforth, what novel do you recommend? for, having a very high opinion of your taſte, I ſhould like to try ſomething of your ſelecting."

"What kind of books does your ladyſhip like?" ſaid I.

"O! all ſorts," replied Lady Arabella; "but do not deſire me to chooſe any thing tedious; for I never read, but when my *femme de chambre* is putting my hair in *papillots*, and that operation ſeldom laſts more than ſix minutes."

"Have you read Mrs. Phantom's laſt work? It has infinite merit."

"I read the firſt page, and did not like it," ſaid Lady Arabella. "But have you nothing to recommend? reflect."

"Shall I offer you "The Sorrows of the Heart;" you will find it well written,

written, and intereſting: its author is a man of enlightened taſte and underſtanding."

"I don't like the title. I never read books that have not pretty names."

"My lady writes charmingly herſelf," ſaid the librarian. "Her ladyſhip has lately produced ſome exquiſitely beautiful lines, for Signor Florini; and it is quite the faſhion to ſing them in all polite circles.

Two ſtanzas were now handed round the library, and read by the Duke as ſpecimens of the powers of finiſhed education; and, as they are probably deſtined to grace a page in the voluminous productions of noble authors, I thought them worth the pains of tranſcribing;—thus:—

" LINES, *addreſſed by a* young Lady of Faſhion *to a ſmall green Fly, which had pitched on the* left ear *of Lady Amaranth's little white* barbet, FIDELIO; *on a ſummer evening, after a ſhower,* near ſunſet.

" Little, barb'rous, cruel *fly!*
Tell me, tell me, tell me why
You to poor FIDELIO bring,
To vex his ear, *ſo keen* a ſting?
Little, barb'rous, cruel fly,
Haſte away, or you muſt DIE!

" Soft!" I hear FIDELIO ſay,
" Do not ſend the *fly* away:
" Let him hover round and round,—
" Let him, let him, let him *wound*;
" Leſt the little rogue ſhould ſip
" HONEY, from *my lady's lip!*"

This extraordinary effort of exalted genius was received by the noble auditors with enthuſiaſtic wonder and applauſe,

plauſe, while every individual ſolicited to have a copy.

Lady Amaranth ordered the librarian to get one hundred immediately ſtruck off on white ſatin, with painted emblematical margins, as preſents for her friends. "I do not mind what they will coſt," cried her ladyſhip, "if they are but truly elegant, ſo as to render the decorations worthy of the poetry. Now let me chooſe the type. Have you any thing very curiouſly printed? Mind that you put all the ſublime paſſages in capital letters, and all the neat points in Italics. It will excite great curioſity in the faſhionable world, and Lady Arabella's fame will make all your living poets expire with envy. You muſt take care to get it handſomely reviewed. Conſider, it is the production of no vulgar pen;—people of rank do not often embelliſh the literary ſphere with ſuch brilliant conſtellations."

"For once," ſaid the Duke, "the doves of Venus will be crowned with the laurels of Apollo!"

Lady Arabella's cheek glowed with conſcious rapture!

"Now let us chooſe the type," interrupted Lady Amaranth.

A ſmall collection of poems, written by a man of real genius, then in priſon for debt, was handed to her ladyſhip.

"This," ſaid the librarian, "is a work of infinite merit. A ſecond volume, now in the preſs, will be publiſhed by ſubſcription; the ſum only half-a-guinea."

Lady Amaranth threw the book aſide; —Mr. Melmoth took it up, and inſtantly whiſpered the librarian to ſhew him the liſt of ſubſcribers. It was produced,—and we looked it over together. Mr. Melmoth ſet down his name for four ſets, and I followed his example.

Lady

Lady Amaranth ſaid, ſhe never ſubſcribed to any thing of the kind, except it was dedicated to herſelf; and the librarian replaced the liſt upon the ſhelf, with a ſigh, and a glance at me, conveying the ſentiment which he was too prudent to utter.

Lady Amaranth again repeated her charge that the poem of Lady Arabella's writing ſhould be ſuperbly printed; the ſatin of the richeſt quality; and each copy bound in pink velvet, embroidered with the arms of her family. "You will take care about the reviewing, in caſe the charming *morceau* ſhould be pirated: remember, that it was written by a perſon of diſtinction, who has it in her power to repay a civil thing, and that handſomely. You underſtand me."

The librarian bowed and ſmiled.

"I ſhall leave the direction of the whole buſineſs to you, Mr. Type," continued her ladyſhip, "for I ſhall ſet out

towards London to-morrow. I have promiſed Lady Fubſy and Mrs. Caſino to aſſiſt them in finiſhing Mrs. Lyric's comedy."

"Does your ladyſhip write?" ſaid the librarian, with evident ſurpriſe.

Lady Amaranth laughed:—"O no! Heaven forbid!" cried ſhe; "I have more elegant and more intereſting occupations, believe me. What I call finiſhing a comedy is quite another kind of thing. We who govern in the higher ſpheres always finiſh thoſe plays which attempt to ridicule our leading refinements. By finiſhing a piece, we mean putting an end to it. A few pounds diſtributed in the galleries, added to our own ſtrong and invincible phalanx, will at any time ſet a theatre in an uproar."

"But if you baniſh ſcenic ridicule from the ſtage, will not the pen of the ſatiriſt meet you on other ground? Does not the liberty of the preſs preſent a thouſand

thouſand avenues for juſt and natural retaliation?" ſaid I.

"Name one," ſaid Lady Amaranth, rather piqued at the obſervation.

"The diurnal prints," anſwered I. "They are not ſo eaſily bought over to the ſervice of unjuſt condemnation. Their conductors are, in general, men of liberal education. Some indeed are highly diſtinguiſhed for literary abilities, and claſſical knowledge."

"The daily papers are too cheap," ſaid the Ducheſs of Riversford; "their price ſhould be raiſed above the pockets of the vulgar. What right have the *canaille* to know the tranſactions of the upper world?"

"That right which is the ſcourge of overbearing licentiouſneſs," anſwered I; "which raiſes the bulwark of freedom above the chaos of folly and deception, and illumines the low hovel of honeſt induſtry, equally with the loftieſt abode of

of pride and diſſipation. Heaven forbid that the time ſhould ever approach when that ſource of public information, which has ſo long been the pride of Engliſhmen, ſhall be cloſed and annihilated! when the country at large, from the palaces of princes to the meaneſt habitations of laborious honeſty, ſhall be deprived of that luminary, whoſe power, while it expands the thinking faculties, protects thoſe rights of which every honeſt mind ſhould be tenacious."

Lady Amaranth made no reply: the Ducheſs ſauntered towards the door: the Duke hummed an opera air; and Mr. Melmoth, by a nod of approbation, flattered my feelings more than a thouſand bows from a thouſand titled heads would have done. It was an honourable tribute from a man of worth and talents: as ſuch, I knew and felt its value.

"Well!"

"Well!" ſighed the Ducheſs, after a ſhort pauſe of reflection, new and unpleaſing to her Grace's mind, "I really think that ſome law ſhould be made to reſcue people of rank from the animadverſions of impertinent ſcribblers. It cannot be of any conſequence to the lower orders of people how we paſs our time."

"Your Grace will pardon me for differing in opinion," ſaid I; "but while the people ſuffer every inconvenience through the evil example ſet them in the higher ſpheres of life, the reaſoning mind has a right to obſerve and to condemn it. While every virtue is exploded from the habitations of the exalted, vice acquires an aſcendancy which undermines the morals of the community, and which muſt, in time, annihilate the bonds of civilized ſociety. For, after all, the only ſure foundation of thoſe laws, which cement a people

and

and form a kingdom, is moral rectitude: take from the mind a ſenſe of ſhame, and you open to the paſſions every avenue which leads to the deſtruction of order, domeſtic peace, conſtitutional allegiance, and ſocial amity."

"You are a profound reaſoner," ſaid his Grace; "but it is the province of the populace to rail at the exalted. The privilege which the laws allow to ſubjects is too extenſive—it only makes the little inſolent, and irritates the great to new acts of perſecution. We always treat impertinent admonition with contempt."

"Very poſſibly," ſaid I; "but the ear which is deaf to the ſoft murmur of a breeze, may be ſtartled by the howling of a tempeſt. Nature will be heard; and the voice of truth may triumph over the apathy of folly, when its victory is the leaſt expected."

"Thank

"Thank Heaven that we are placed upon an eminence that ſets every aſſailant at defiance," ſaid the Ducheſs.

"There again the dull and arrogant mind miſleads itſelf," anſwered I;—— "there is no eminence which reprehenſion cannot reach—no ſhield which the ſhaft of ridicule cannot penetrate. The higher the objects of contempt are placed, the ſurer they become marks for the obſerving multitude; for

'Tis in their greatneſs their conviction lies.
Unſeen the ſweeteſt low-born buds decay;
But the proud cedar, tow'ring on the rock,
Stands like a landmark to attract men's eyes;
And tho' it ſhares the bright meridian blaze,
It cannot 'ſcape the pelting of the ſtorm."

"That may be very fine, and very poetical," ſaid Lady Amaranth; "but the perſonal conſequence of nobility is not to be depreciated by the attacks of the vulgar."

"The

"The vulgar are not the people who comment on the enormities of fashionable vice," said I; "those who presume to observe and to condemn are as far from the lower orders of society as from the elevated circle of a court. The outrages committed by some whose rank renders them doubly conspicuous, are felt by all descriptions of persons; for their pernicious example, spreading like a contagious disease, descends even to the lowest habitations, and contaminates those minds which have not reflection to resist it. The nobleman who keeps a public gaming-table, and the tame and sordid fool who tacitly winks at his wife's depravity, are noxious weeds that poison the very source of civilized order, and make nature shudder at the innovations of licentiousness: can such a man be astonished if his lacquey robs him?—or such a woman complain if her female epitome imitates the vices of her mistress,

treſs, even at the expence of every domeſtic comfort? I have indeed heard of even more horrible violations of thoſe decencies which harmonize ſociety; inſtances where the neareſt connections of propinquity have proved no bar to the indulgence of a criminal attachment. I have alſo been informed, that a *titled* libertine, who in his days of poverty was ſupported by a lovely, generous woman, after her bloom of youth was faded, and his vanity completely ſatiated, forgetting all the pure ſenſations of gratitude and honour, completed his plan of triumph and duplicity, by marrying her daughter! But the career of infamy was of ſhort duration—the unbluſhing profligate cloſed the ſcene of folly with his life; and left not a boſom that beſtowed a ſingle ſigh, nor an eye that dropped a tear to conſecrate his aſhes."

"Every man has a right to pleaſe himſelf," ſaid his Grace of Heartwing.

"Such

"Such is the doctrine of overbearing pride," said I; "but every man has not a right to destroy the happiness of another. And however the exalted offender may fancy himself secure beneath the robe of nobility, he is not concealed from the open and ever-watchful eyes of public observation. The voice of truth is expelled from the chambers of our rulers.—The man who dares be honest is deemed an enemy—bold officious fool; while panders, knaves, and sycophants, men without honour, and women without shame, hang round their sinking victims till they ingulph them. Let those who wish to bask in the smiles of public favour, who seek the distinctions of popularity, and the graced affections growing from the pure and feeling heart, associate with chosen friends—picked from the neglected tribes of enlightened and honourable men, who are too proud to flatter, and too honest to deceive.

deceive. For, however greatneſs may exalt the brow, and keep the multitude at a diſtance, the moſt powerful of the human race, in theſe momentous times, are *men of letters*, not men of *titles*:—thoſe who can guide the *pen*, and influence the country by the genuine language of truth and philanthropy; not the trifling, fawning, diſſipated idiot who, like the noxious weed, twines round the moſt thriving tree, and while it ſeems to decorate its trunk, deſtroys it."

"I do not comprehend you," ſaid her Grace.

"The idea is by no means hypothetical," anſwered I; "the convulſions of regenerated France are like the contending ſymptoms of vitality where the object has been benumbed by ſuſpended circulation. The ears of princes in the atmoſphere of Verſailles were deaf to ſupplicating merit: their hearts were cloſed againſt ſuffering talents, by a petrifying torpidity,

torpidity, and their minds contaminated by falſe and vicious counſellors,—till nature ſhuddered at their injuſtice, and reaſon nerved her arm to ſcourge them. Every neglected man of genius became the enemy of deſpotiſm; every exalted ſon of illuſtrious intellect flew to the ſtandard of tremendous retribution. The ſinking phalanx then would have employed thoſe energies to ſave them, which, before, they had deſpiſed—would have offered ſmiles and honours to ſecure their favour! But the ſupplication came too late—for virtue was rouſed from the apathy of cuſtom, and inſulted reaſon triumphed over the ravages of infamy."

"You do not pretend to ſay that there are no diſtinctions in the human race?" ſaid Lady Amaranth.

"Mental diſtinctions there certainly are," anſwered I: "but ſetting aſide the innate qualities of the heart, the prince and the peaſant more nearly reſemble

each other, than your ladyſhip will readily believe. Take the offspring of the nobleſt parent, and the hovel-born child of adverſity—educate them with equal liberality—and the chance is even, that the one exhibits all the attributes of reaſon, all the graces of illuſtrious virtue, as proudly as the other. Yet the moſt enormous vices are not practiſed by the humble orders of the community, even with all the diſadvantages of low birth and education."

"Well! I proteſt I never heard ſuch doctrine!" interrupted the Ducheſs.

"Moſt likely not, Madam," ſaid I; "Your Grace's beauty has made many idols! but even the temple of divinity has been profaned by daring impoſtors, and its truths been violated for purpoſes of fraud: yet, truſt me, time will ſhew that nature's pure and ſimple doctrine touches the heart, while oſtentatious folly ſickens and diſguſts it."

"It

"It can be of no great conſequence what the world thinks, or what men can write," cried Lady Amaranth, yawning.

"Pardon me," ſaid I, "if I venture to affirm that, had not ſuch men as Rouſſeau and Voltaire exiſted, the earth had ſtill been ſhackled by tyranny and ſuperſtition. Does your ladyſhip ſuppoſe that this little iſland is exempt from the reſt of the habitable globe? and that, while philoſophy beams far and wide on other nations, we alone ſhall vegitate in the glooms of ignorance? The embryo bloſſoms of genius cannot long lie dormant; and if any thing will quicken their expanſion, it will be the ſhameleſs neglect which has too long condemned them to oblivion."

"Can the world complain that genius is not adored and cheriſhed, while its admiration is directed towards this lovely example?" cried the Duke, addreſſing the young poeteſs.

Lady

Lady Arabella wore her newly-woven laurels with becoming dignity; while his Grace of Heartwing, with a polite oath, pronounced her ladyſhip the moſt ſublime and finiſhed poet of the preſent century.

Again her wonderful production became the topic of converſation.

"How beautifully harmonious is the ſecond line of the firſt ſtanza!" cried Lady Amaranth—"The repetition of words is ſo neatly, and at the ſame time ſo poetically arranged—nothing can be ſweeter! Which is your Grace's favourite line?" addreſſing the Ducheſs.

"Why, I think the fourth line of the ſecond part—it conveys ſuch natural and intereſting acquieſcence."

"Her Grace ſpeaks from ſympathetic feeling, authoriſed by experience," cried the Duke. "Now, for my part, the idea which moſt pleaſes me is the honeyed lip! the very thought thrills

through my heart, and melts it like new-fallen ſnow."

"I deny the ſimilitude," interrupted her Grace—"new-fallen ſnow is both *cold* and *pure*."

"How can my heart retain either of thoſe qualities in your Grace's ſervice?" replied the Duke, with his accuſtomed gallantry and good-nature.——"But which line does the fair poeteſs think the moſt beautiful?"

Lady Arabella looked earneſtly at me, and with a bewitching ſmile, equally expreſſive of caution and vivacity, replied—"The laſt line of the firſt ſtanza."

I comprehended her meaning——obeyed—and inſtantly departed.

CHAP. LXVI.

On my return to the inn, I found that the chaiſe had been waiting ſome time; and I immediately ſet out for Briſtol.—The night was particularly dark, and my ſpirits, labouring under a painful depreſſion, cheriſhed ſuch melancholy thoughts as ſeemed to deepen the gloomy hour of travelling. A thouſand ſad and deſponding projects by turns took poſſeſſion of my mind; and the long-meditated plan of ſelf-annihilation ſeemed to predominate over every other. The caprice of fortune had wearied me into diſguſt, which rendered life ſcarcely worth preſerving. I looked round the world—I beheld virtue and genius oppreſſed, and deſtined to encounter every humiliation, while vice

and ignorance reared their unbluſhing heads, and ſmiled as they abjured all the ſympathies of nature. When I compared the liberal, the amiable child of ſorrow, with the herd of titled and exalted profligates—when I beheld the eye of genius dimmed with the tear of adverſity—was it ſingular that I ſhould turn from the ſcene with horror, and wiſh for repoſe—even in the oblivion of the grave?

Amidſt all the varying conflicts of a perturbed imagination, I ſtill loved Iſabella. It ſeemed to be my deſtiny that the enthuſiaſtic fondneſs of my heart ſhould augment, in proportion as ſhe repaid my attachment with indifference or ſcorn. This may be folly; it may be weakneſs bordering on idiotiſm; it may be a mean and deſpicable want of pride and fortitude: I ſhall leave wiſer heads and colder boſoms to decide the point, while I, from long and fatal experience—

rience—from nights of rumination and days of unceaſing agony, pronounce it Nature. The human mind ſeldom relinquiſhes a purſuit wherein ſelf-love is the predominating ſpring of action. All the vanity of the heart is rouſed to ſubdue that which preſumes to reſiſt its wiſhes; and we are unwilling to relinquiſh a ſhadow of ſucceſs, leſt we betray our want of power, though the accompliſhment of our enterpriſe promiſes little happineſs to reward us for our labour.

Poor Amelia! often did her deſtruction preſs upon my aching heart—and never without leaving a deepened wound to torture it. Her mild and ſoothing virtues—her ſympathizing boſom, ready to participate in every pang which fortune could inflict—her noble, her diſintereſted friendſhip, at a moment when the world forſook me, and the horrors of poverty and ſickneſs added new force

to the fever of deſpair, crowded on my exhauſted mind, and robbed it of every hope which reaſon might have cheriſhed. She had ſacrificed all that was dear to propriety for my ſake—ſhe had relinquiſhed the ſmiles of fortune, the protection of her family, the admiration of the virtuous, and the proſpect of repoſe. How did I requite her kindneſs?—I abandoned her like a cold-boſomed determined libertine; rejected her generous and feeling heart, and left it to feed the ſcorpion of compunction, while I purſued a phantom that was perpetually flying from me.

Reflection told me that Miſs Woodford was, in perſonal attractions, equal to Iſabella—for mental charms no leſs diſtinguiſhed—in affections more attaching to any reaſonable mind—in all the graces of truth, unvarniſhed ſenſibility, heroic friendſhip, infinitely ſuperior. Then wherefore did I ſhrink from the one, and

blindly perſevere in idolizing the other? Becauſe I was the dupe of my own paſſions, an alien from reaſon, the ſlave of early impreſſions, and the pupil of reſiſtleſs nature.

I ſet out on my journey through life with a boſom aching under the preſſure of unkindneſs. As my mind expanded, I progreſſively learnt to diſcriminate betwixt the homage which venal minds pay to powerful unworthineſs, and the cold applauſe which merit meets with in the buſy varying paths of human trial. I found that the natural paſſions implanted in the breaſt of man were too often terribly triumphant over the ſober dictates of reaſon and reflection, and that the gratification of thoſe paſſions would inevitably involve their victim in ruin and diſgrace; yet I had not ſtrength of mind to vanquiſh the ſtrong hand of Nature, which, in ſpite of every oppoſing power, propelled me on to

errors:—let me not ſoften the appellation, let not the ſophiſtry of ſelf-extenuation lay the "flattering unction" to my ſoul, but ſuffer me, O mild and ſympathizing monitreſs! to call them crimes. Yes, I am a criminal—an involuntary criminal. But I begin to find the iron ſhield of defiance growing over my breaſt; I begin to hate my oppreſſors. Perſecuted by my fellow man, can I be leſs than a miſanthropiſt?—The overbearing inſolence of pride diſſolves the ſocial bonds of life, and engenders all the ills that deform the human mind, while every avenue to the heart is by degrees cloſed againſt affection, pity, and compunction. Can a creature whom the world inceſſantly perſecutes, who is the very make-game of fortune, whoſe boſom, tempeſt-beaten by adverſity and wrung by ſorrow, experiences neither the compaſſion nor the kindneſs of his ſpecies—can he be

expected

expected to love thoſe beings who deſtroy his hopes, and caſt him, like a ſhip-wrecked ſufferer on a ſtormy ſhore, to wither his youth in ſadneſs, or in deſpair to periſh?—Impoſſible. It is man alone that forms the miſanthrope; he arms himſelf againſt his brother man, and then wonders at the courage that reſiſts him. Had I found either friendſhip, virtue, or humanity in my intercourſe with the exalted, I might, like a feather, have been borne along by every breath, and at laſt have glided, pleaſed, down the ſtream of folly to oblivion. But thoſe who are greatly injured, have a right to be ſtrongly indignant. If knaves and villains are to paſs through the dark variety of ſucceſſive crimes—to ingulph others, and to eſcape themſelves—where is the juſtice of mankind? and what are the bonds that harmonize ſociety?

I had frequently meditated ſuicide, and, with all its horrors, all its criminality, I could not diveſt myſelf of that longing after death, which could alone terminate a life of unmitigable ſorrow; for to whatever point my weary eyes were directed, the proſpect teemed with miſery. My ſpirit, by nature reſtleſs, perpetually wandered back to ſcenes of perſecution, and time preſented no oblivion to the retroſpect, but the darkneſs of a ſepulchre. Could I reſtore Colonel Aubrey's peace of mind—Amelia's reputation—Lord Linbourne's life?—Impoſſible. Then where was I to hope for happineſs?—in age and apathy? Could I look forward to enjoyments, when the finer powers of ſenſation became extinct? Would not my diſaſtrous fortune urge me on to an accumulation of crimes? and was it not virtue to ſhake off a being, which would either become a curſe to ſociety,

or

or a terrible example of offended juſtice?—I had once cheriſhed, with horrible delight, the hope of deſtroying Sir Sidney Aubrey; I had, in fancy, violated Iſabella's honour:—Amelia was the victim;—ſhe lived to breathe forth the perpetual ſigh of torturing reproach, and I was ſtill defeated in the gratification which revenge had meditated on my rival. Theſe were my hourly ruminations. Ah, Roſanna! ſuch is the exile whom you honour with your friendſhip. Such are the confeſſions of a being, whoſe infant mind was contaminated by prejudice, and who, taught to hate mankind before he was capable of diſcriminating the difference betwixt the graces of virtue, and the deformities of vice, conſidered the viciſſitudes of fate as individual perſecutions, which human feeling was bound to oppoſe, and reſiſting ſtrength to puniſh. The baſis of philoſophy is an univerſal love

of our ſpecies; the miſchiefs of jealouſy, reſentment, pride, revenge, and hatred, ſet its precepts at defiance, while they nouriſh all the miſeries of life, and render the thinking creature, man, ſcarcely one degree leſs ſavage than the tiger which he ſhrinks from.

It was near midnight when I arrived at Briſtol. I ſtopped the chaiſe at Mr. Randolph's door, and knocked with an impetuoſity which clearly demonſtrated the impatience of my mind: but how ſhall I deſcribe my chagrin when the ſervant informed me that Mr. Randolph had, early in the morning of the ſame day, ſet out for Glenowen? I had taken a ſolemn oath never to viſit my native mountains during the lifetime of Lady Aubrey, and my diſappointment was unutterable. There was nothing to be done but to return to Bath; and, as ſoon as freſh horſes could be procured, I ſet out to re-meaſure my tedious journey.

journey. The irritation of my mind was in no degree abated by this new ſource of vexation: I added the perplexing event to the long catalogue of my misfortunes, and the only idea which rendered them ſupportable was that of their ſpeedy termination.

As ſoon as I entered the inn at Bath, I haſtened to my apartment, where I wrote the following

SONNET.

O buſy WORLD! ſince ev'ry paſſing day
Preſents new ſcenes of agonizing woe;
Say, whither ſhall the child of mis'ry go?
Where ſeek, mid thorns, one flow'r to deck his way?
My ſtormy hour preſents no cheering ray;
For me, no ſummer morn ſhall proudly glow:
Round my chill'd heart the winds of winter blow,
While fainting Hope but lingers to decay.
Oh, barb'rous World! why from my bleeding breaſt
Bid peace, with all the pure affections, fly?
While round my couch, Deſpair, in horrors dreſt,
From my torn heart extorts th' eternal ſigh.
Bid me, oh! bid thy trembling victim reſt,
For ſince 'tis *hell* to live—'tis HEAV'N to die!

By

By the time I finiſhed the effuſion of deſpair, the morning was far advanced, and the houſe was perfectly ſtill. I threw myſelf on my bed, and paſſed an hour in meditation; the reſult of which was terrible to remember. I felt aſſured that exiſtence had no joys in ſtore for me, and I reſolved to periſh. My piſtols were loaded; my mind diſordered by the frenzy of deſpair. I roſe, and advanced towards them:—I ſtopped;—the blood ſeemed to recoil from my heart. I ventured another ſtep;—the abbey clock ſtruck four, and again all was ſilent. Thou ſolemn tongue of Time! thought I, when next thy deep vibrations ſteal from their antique towers, I ſhall be at reſt!—this feveriſh brain will for ever ceaſe to ache! this heart, this proudly throbbing heart, will freeze to the very centre!

I was now within a ſtep of the table. I ſhuddered not while I fixed my eyes on

on the inſtruments of death: I ſtretched forth my hand; it did not tremble. "The deed," ſaid I, "is repugnant to nature—but I am an outcaſt; for me the world has neither comfort nor affection. I have been buffeted by the ſtorms of fortune, wounded by the arrogant, neglected by the proud; the object deareſt to my heart has inflicted on that heart—a wound, which time can never cure. Then wherefore ſhould I live?"

I was rouſed from my reverie of ſadneſs by a ruſtling ſound in the adjoining room. I heſitated, and liſtened; but hearing nothing move, again returned to the table. Preſently a bell was rung, and a lamp called for. As it entered the apartment, I perceived a ſmall window over the door of my chamber, while a faint voice demanded, "Who ſleeps in the next apartment?"

"A

"A ſtrange gentleman," replied the female ſervant of the houſe. "I don't knaw his name, but in the morning I'll ax."

"It is of little importance," ſaid the feeble inquirer, with a faint and tremulous tone. "I only believe that the perſon is mad, by his ſtrange and incoherent language; indeed I thought I knew his voice. Do you not remember to have heard his name?"

"Naw, my lady. But he's a lord—that I be zure on."

"Then I was miſtaken," ſaid the lady; "but that he is out of his ſenſes is moſt certain: I have not been able to cloſe my eyes ſince he entered his chamber."

"Zure!" exclaimed the chamber-maid; "you don't tell me zo. Why you muſt knaw, that when I lit him to his room, I thought a zeem'd to look mighty creazed. His eyes be as wild

as

as our tabby cat's, and his cheek as pale as the very ſheets. I think a is bezide himzelf, zure enough. Poor zaul! I've a great mind to bide at his door all night; for a zeems quite a quality parſon, and I a-bin told, that your quality be terrible apt to make away we themſelves. Dear lack! I ſhou'd never be able to bide in the houſe for fear of his haunting it. I wiſh I cou'd do any thing to keep him from zuch diſmal ways; for he is too comely a gentleman to be let die, if one knaw'd how to ſave'n."

"You increaſe my alarm!" ſaid the lady; "your deſcription convinces me that he is a maniac."

"O Lord-a-mighty!—a what?—I never zeed zuch a thing in all my born days!" cried the girl. "I took'n for a gentleman, and a look'd for all the world juſt like one. Shall I call up meaſter?"

"I dare

"I dare say he is a gentleman," said the fair invalid, faintly; "but he may, nevertheless, be a maniac."

"Zure!" exclaimed the girl; "who wou'd-a-thought it? What's to be done?—Do-'e think that I could do any thing to quiet'n? I shall be very willing, God knows!—No quality parson that ever tarried at our house can zay that I refused to do whatever they axed me."

"I dare say you are very obliging," cried the lady.

"Ees, zure; I be always agreeable and complying."

"Then examine whether the door is fast, leave your light upon the hearth, and I will endeavour to sleep," said the invalid.

"Ben't-e a-fear'd to bide alone?" cried the girl; "and zo near the what-d'ye-call-um gentleman?—You can't think how terrible scared a look'd!—

the

the wicked-one is often buſy with quality ſokes, and who do knaw but a-may break in, and beheave ungenteelly or zo!—I ſhould be mazed, and that's the truth on't, if 'twere I——but you knaw beſt what pleaſes you, and I be always agreeable."

I placed a chair near the door of communication, and, raiſing myſelf upon it, endeavoured to get a view of the lady, whoſe voice awakened my curioſity. "Huſh! do'e but harken!" ſaid chambermaid. "As zure as I be living, he's agwain to hang himſelf. Lord-a-maſſey upon us! what a rumpus there will be in the houſe, if ſuch a pretty gentleman ſhould make away with himſelf. Then a-wou'd be buried in the croſs roads, with a ſtake drived through un."

The idea made me ſhudder with horror.

"And

"And then he'd be only made game on for his pains; for the world never pities fokes that are bezide themzelves."

That's true, thought I. She continued—

"Perhaps he be in love?—poor zaul!—Well, if his ſweetheart proves falſe, a may perhaps find another that will make him amends for it. You can't think what a comely gentleman a-his—a little ſun-burnt or zo; but his eyes be as black as a ſloe, and he is as tall and as ſtraight as a may-pole: and yet for all that, I war'nt he'd be forgot juſt as zoon as an ugly-body. Nobody would care a pin about him, becauſe a-was ſo fooliſh as to kill himſelf for love; a thing that every body laughs at now-a-days. Then what wou'd a-get by it? why, he'd go to the wicked-one, and there'd be an end of'n!—'Twould be time enough to go to the next world when

when a gets old and ugly: don't you think zo, ma'am?—I'm zure *I* do."

The lady, by her ſilence, had fallen into a ſlumber—the girl continued—I liſtened.

"Beſides, ma'am, it would be zo pigeon-hearted, and zo wicked at the ſeame time: and then the place where a would be buried, like a dog as one may zay, would be troubled with his ghoſt, as zure as I be living; and 'twou'd be talked on time out a mind, and nawbody would go by the road after dark, it wou'd be zo unkid; for country-vokes be ſometimes terrible frightful. There's nawbody more timerſome than I; and I ſhou'd be ſorry to be frightful for zuch a comely looking gentleman—that's the truth on't. Dear me, if I cou'dn't cry my eyes out, only but to think what wou'd become of'n, if a was to take to deſpurt ways."

The lady ſtill remaining ſilent, her attendant, who was young and hand-

ſome,

ſome, advancing towards a table on which ſtood a dreſſing-glaſs, and viewing her countenance with evident admiration, reſumed her comments, while ſhe gratified her vanity.

"Then, ma'am, you knaw," ſaid ſhe, ſtill looking at herſelf, "vokes will think that a-has done zomething terrible wicked, and was glad to rid himſelf of life for fear of the juſtices; and if he has got any kinsfolk or acquaintances, why they'd be aſhamed to own that a belong'd to um. So a wou'd go to the bad place, and loſe his character, and all for nothing; while the whole world, with his falſe-hearted ſweetheart into the bargain, wou'd laugh and ſnicker at'n for a great fooliſh ninnyhammer."

This was Nature's reaſoning, and on me its impreſſion was certain. Every word ſunk deep into my heart; all the lore of wiſdom, all the ſophiſtry of

ſchools, could not have poured perſuaſion into my mind like that which fell from the tongue of this ſimple moraliſt. Yes, thought I, I ſhould be ſtigmatized as a fool, a coward, a deſpicable criminal. The world would laugh at me—my friends, if I have any, would condemn me—Iſabella would triumph—and, as ſoon as my mangled remains were marked with ignominious violence, my name would either be forgotten, or my crime remembered with abhorrence; all that this artleſs girl had propheſied would, in the ſpace of a few ſhort weeks, be realized. The voice of reaſon ſpeaks through the ſoul-enchaining organs of reſiſtleſs truth; a child of Nature evinces that the poliſh of education, like the touch of the lapidary, by giving too fine a luſtre, ſometimes deſtroys the gem it ſeeks to embelliſh: for we have known many examples, where deep and laborious mental

mental toil has enervated the reaſoning faculties, by overcharging the labyrinths of thought; while a moderate ſhare of learning has called forth that flame which animated the boſom of a Shakeſpeare! and rouſed, to daring intrepidity, the loſty ſpirit of a Cromwell.

CHAP. LXVII.

THE pretty chambermaid continued near the dreſſing-table; and I had, from the ſituation in which I placed myſelf, a perfect and diſtinct view of her features as they were reflected in the glaſs before her: they were exquiſitely beautiful. A box of *rouge* ſtood near her hand. After looking ſeveral times towards the bed, to obſerve that the curtains were quite cloſed, ſhe with trembling

bling caution deepened the fine tint of her cheek, while ſhe contemplated the fancied improvement with evident approbation. A lady's riding-hat, adorned with white feathers, was the next object of trial; and a deep-drawn ſigh ſeemed to declare her longing for thoſe ornaments, which would not have lent an additional charm to the lovelineſs of nature.

After paſſing ſeveral minutes in ſilent contemplation, during which her countenance aſſumed a variety of expreſſion not eaſily deſcribed, ſhe ſtole towards the bed and liſtened. On her return to the table, every thing that lay ſcattered about was curiouſly examined, not without frequent glances at the object which the mirror ſtill preſented. A train of reflections ſtole acroſs my mind. Poor, pretty, painted fly! thou art like the inſect which hovers round the flame that kills it, thought I. Thou longeſt at this

moment to revel in the full ſplendor of thoſe vanities, which would inevitably deſtroy thee. Thou haſt no rank, no exalted ſhield to protect thee from the taunting world; no privilege to violate the decencies of life; no gold to purchaſe praiſe; to ſilence truth; or to hire aſſaſſins, who may cruſh thy enemies. Thy pure unpractiſed heart would ſhrink at perſecution; and thou would'ſt, being poor and unprotected, periſh beneath the inſults of unpitying enemies.

While I was abſorbed in theſe reflections, the lady, who was concealed from my view by the cloſely drawn curtains, ſighed deeply. Her pretty, but inquiſitive attendant ſtole ſoftly towards the door, and, after ſliding the hat upon a chair, was making her eſcape, when my unlucky phyſiognomy met her eye. Before I had time to deſcend, ſhe haſtened to the other ſide of the bed, and ſhrieked moſt vehemently: the lady joined in the terrifying

terrifying ſounds, and in a few minutes the whole houſe was awakened.

"A ghoſt! a ghoſt!" exclaimed the affrighted girl. "The ghoſt of the what-d'ye-call-um gentleman! I zaw it we my awn eyes. A looked at I as bitter as thof a wou'd kill a-body! Nobody knaws the reaſon but I. Dont-'e ax me! dont-'e ax me!" Again ſhe ſhrieked, while ſeveral perſons, who had ruſhed into the room, deſired her to explain her meaning.

"Oh! I zed a-wou'd walk, I zed a-wou'd trouble the houſe!" cried ſhe. "A was as white as church wall, and as tall as the ſteaple!—Never zure zince I comed from Devonſhire did zuch a mortal fright appear before I. I ſhall never reſt in my bed, that's zure! for I hadn't the heart to ax'n what a wou'd ha with I; and I knaw that the ghoſt had zummut to zay, or a-wou'dn't a walk'd, that's for ſartin. Dont-e awp'n

the door!—dont-e, if ye bean't out of your wits. Who knaws what a may do if one angers him!"

"Whom, and what do you mean?" cried a ſtrange voice. "Diſh my jaſey, you're quizzing us. Stop your gab, and tell us, what's the fun now?"

"O! 'tis naw fun, your honour my Lord," replied the chambermaid; "'tis all as true as the Goſpel: if I be alive I zaw his ghoſt! The lady can tell-e what a-was; ſhe calld'n by a ſtrange out-of-the-way neam. I can't bring it to mind: but, as zure as I was born, I zeed'n with my awn eyes."

"So I ſuppoſe, if you ſaw him at all," interrupted the interrogator; "but leave ſhamming, and talk ſo that one may underſtand you. I do not believe in ghoſts."

"O! dont-e zay zo,—dont-e, if you ha'n't a mind to bring un back again. God A-mighty vorgi' me, for I did provoke'n,

provoke'n, that's the truth on't. If a-had a mind to hang himzelf, what was that to I? I had naw buſineſs to be meddling and meaking with other vokes troubles, not I. I tould the lady that a-was mazed, when a-comed to our inn; and ſhe was of the zame way o'think-ing. The Lord-a-maſſy on his poor zaul! for as zure as I be living, the wicked one has got'n."

On hearing me try the door of com-munication, ſhe again began to ſhriek.

"Why, daſh my wig, you ſcream like a peacock! You have dinned the drum of my ears, till I cannot hear my own voice," ſaid the ſtranger.—The girl continued:—

"Awver the door! awver the door! we two eyes like the lanterns of the male coach; and a mouth for all the world like the geats of our abbey! There did I zee un, or I bean't alive. Well, God A-mighty forgive I! I had

naw buſineſs to backbite the poor zaul, that's zure enough! thof I knaw'd that a-wou'd make away we a-ſelf the moment I zet eyes on-un: a-look'd as 'twere betwattled."

"Quiz me, but you're a queer one!" ſaid the ſtranger; "where did you learn your gab? Why you may as well explain the buſineſs in Greek or Hebrew, as in the twaddling language you adopt. Why you have been knawing and zawing this half hour, and not got through your ſtory after all."

Finding that the curioſity which this ſimple girl would excite, could not fail to procure me a viſit from her hearers, I paſſed by another door which communicated with the ſtaircaſe, and preſently joined the group. On entering the room, I perceived the chambermaid ſitting on the ground, ſurrounded by ſeveral perſons collected from all parts of the inn, and a more groteſque aſſemblage

blage never inſpired the pencil of a caricaturiſt. At the ſight of me, her ſhrieks grew louder than ever, till ſhe fell into a fit of hyſterics, and became wholly ungovernable; while to my infinite aſtoniſhment I found that the perſon whoſe voice had laſt addreſſed her, was the young nobleman whom I had met in the watch-houſe, on the firſt night of my arrival in London. The ſituation in which I had then ſeen him totally precluded the poſſibility of his recollecting me, though his features were inſtantly recognized on my entering the apartment.

As ſoon as the firſt impreſſion of aſtoniſhment ſubſided, and the terrified girl began to recover her ſenſes, I felt an unaccountable longing to peep at the lady within the curtains. There was ſomething in her voice, though low, feeble, and ſcarcely articulate, that awakened more than common curioſity.

Doubtful whether or not ſhe was connected with any of the perſons then preſent, I waited to hear what they would ſay when the girl became reconciled to my appearance. The whole group was preparing to depart, without making the ſlighteſt inquiry after the fair invalid, whoſe ſilence convinced me that ſhe wiſhed to remain unnoticed. There is ſome myſtery, thought I, in this taciturnity, and therefore I will be prudent. Still the buſy genius which never ſuffered my imagination to repoſe, prompted me to diſcover whom it could be, and what occaſioned ſuch extraordinary caution. The trembling chambermaid was led towards her apartment; the group followed; and I was left alone with the ſilent incognita.

However ſingular it may appear, the moment I had the power to gratify my curioſity, the inclination ſubſided. There appeared to be ſomething ſo indelicately obtruſive

obtruſive in the attempt, that I had not reſolution to draw back the curtains. That ſhe was alive, there could not be a ſhadow of doubt; her ſhrieks were proofs inconteſtible. That ſhe was ſilent did not aſtoniſh me, becauſe in ſuch a ſituation, the only way to eſcape diſcovery was to avoid every thing that might excite attention. I walked about the room, in hopes that ſhe would ſpeak; but not a ſyllable did ſhe utter. I advanced towards the bed; again receded; a ſecond time approached a few ſteps, and recoiled with equal ſelf-reproof. I now ventured to ſpeak, and to expreſs a hope that the ſilly girl had not alarmed her. Not a word repaid my attentions, and I began to fear that ſhe was dead, when a long-laboured ſigh relieved me from the horrors of apprehenſion.

I pauſed ſeveral minutes, undecided how to act: my longing to obtain a ſight of the unknown invalid was ſcarcely

to be conquered: yet I knew not how to ſatisfy my inclination, without the riſk of again alarming her; and the certainty that my conduct would be deemed a violation of decorum, inſulting to the delicacy of her ſex, made me recoil whenever I approached her. I therefore reſolved to return to my chamber, and to wait till her hour of riſing, when I might with propriety inquire after her health. I examined the door of communication; it had no faſtening on my ſide; ſhe therefore had the power to prevent my re-entering her apartment; but I had ſtill the panes of glaſs over it, from whence I could ſee, and convince myſelf whether I knew her, in caſe ſhe might refuſe me admittance into her preſence.

Day-light began to enter through my curtains; and as I bent my eyes on the piſtols which lay before me, my heart ſhuddered, and my whole frame was chilled

chilled with a tremor which cannot be deſcribed. The interval of reaſon had ſubdued the impatience of deſpair; and I ſcarcely dared approach that ſpot on which, only two hours before, I had meditated ſelf-deſtruction. The momentary frenzy, diverted from its courſe by a combination of trivial events, had paſſed away like a ſummer ſtorm; and the unclouded intellect which ſucceeded, made me bluſh at the impetuoſity of my paſſions. So rapid are the tranſitions of irritable minds; ſo minute is ſometimes the event which determines the fate of mortals, that even on the verge of eternity, when the criſis makes the ſoul tremble in the conflict, one glimmering ray of reaſon can deſtroy the gloomy ſhadows of deſpair, and check the hand that is raiſed to annihilate!

While I ſtood transfixed and chilled with horror, a murmuring groan awakened my attention. I liſtened; it was

repeated. Human reſolution could no longer reſiſt the impulſe of curioſity, and, on tip-toe, I returned to the adjoining chamber.

CHAP. LXVIII.

I GENTLY drew back the curtain, and, with a degree of conſternation which no language can deſcribe, beheld Amelia Woodford pale and entirely ſenſeleſs! Her eyes were cloſed; her cheek had loſt that beautiful and healthful roundneſs which exhibited the freſhneſs of youth, when a few weeks back I had beheld her the pride of her family, and the admiration of the faſhionable world. She appeared at leaſt ten years older, and ſo unlike her former ſelf, that had not every feature been indelibly impreſſed

preſſed upon my mind, I ſhould not have known her. I touched her arm which lay acroſs her boſom; it was as cold as marble; her lips were colourleſs; ſhe ſcarcely breathed, and my diſtreſs was terrible. I was at a loſs to decide, in my own mind, whether ſhe was only in a ſtate of ſuſpended ſenſation, owing to the fright ſhe had experienced, or abſolutely expiring. In either caſe, I deemed myſelf acceſſary to her peril, and throwing myſelf on my knees near her pillow, gave way to the moſt diſtracted ſelf-reproaches.

"Poor, gentle victim of a too generous ſenſibility!" ſaid I; "am I, at laſt, deſtined to cloſe thy eyes in death, and to witneſs that ſcene of horror which will conſign me to perpetual anguiſh?" I kiſſed her pale and icy cheek;—I preſſed her liſtleſs hand to my aching, feveriſh boſom. "Too ſurely it was the magnet of unerring deſtiny which drew

drew me hither," ſaid I, "to receive an awful and deciſive puniſhment for all the agonies which thy gentle heart has ſuffered!" I roſe haſtily; I raiſed her on my trembling arm; her whole frame was powerleſs. I addreſſed her in the kindeſt and moſt ſoothing language; but ſhe heard me not. Expecting every moment that ſhe would breathe her laſt ſigh upon my ungrateful boſom, I raved like a wretch deprived of reaſon, and curſed my fate in the very bitterneſs of ſorrow.

The ſound of my voice brought the chambermaid once more to the ſcene of diſtreſs. As ſoon as ſhe entered the room, I demanded when Miſs Woodford arrived; and whether ſhe was alone.

"She comed late laſt night," ſaid the girl; "and a young gentleman comed we her."

"A young gentleman—!"

"Aye

"Aye zure. He that you zeed here but juſt now," replied the girl. "He is a lord, and a-zeemed mighty fond of the poor young lady, that's the truth on't; and a-zaid that was a-going to Briſter bytimes in the morning; zo if you do want to zee my lord, you be lucky to have catched'n. I ſhall go and call the lady's gentleman? A-do only ſleep in next chamber—an I warr'nt he'll come, if I do fetch un, thof I be a little afeard of 'n too."

"Do you know his name?" ſaid I haſtily, ſtill ſupporting Amelia, and watching her death-like features.

"No, but I can ax his walley,—the foreigner gentleman;—I don't fear he."—

"Fly quickly," ſaid I, "and mind that you make no miſtake;—every moment is precious,—every inſtant full of danger."

"Zure!

"Zure! Well, I'll not tarry; but take care you don't let the poor lady die while I be wanting."

Away flew the girl, and again I conjured Amelia, if ſhe had the ſmalleſt degree of ſenſation, to anſwer, and relieve me.—"Dear and gentle friend," ſaid I, "ſpeak to the unhappy Walſingham."—A convulſive ſpaſm ſhook her frame almoſt to annihilation; for the moment of returning ſenſe was rendered terrible, by the ſound of that voice, which ſhe could not but remember with agony.

The ſimple chambermaid juſtly believed that no perſon was ſo capable of giving her the name of the young nobleman as he who bore it: ſhe therefore thought, that the ſhorteſt way of ſettling the matter was to make him a viſit, without farther heſitation; and in a few minutes he entered the chamber. As he approached the bed, Amelia endeavoured

voured to ſpeak; but the feeble ſtate of her nerves, and the univerſal laſſitude which poſſeſſed her frame, prevented the power of utterance.

"D—me, this is a good go!" exclaimed the young lord. "Who the devil are *you*, Sir? and what buſineſs have you in this lady's chamber? Come, kennel my keen ſportſman—there's no bird for you in this covey;—tip us the go-by—or I ſhall be apt to ſhew you the way—daſh my jaſey."

I made no anſwer, but ſtill gazed on Amelia with a mixture of pity and compunction. She frequently raiſed her languid and feveriſh eyes towards me; ſhe ſighed deeply, and often: a tear rolled down her wan cheek,—and my heart was burſting with conſcious agonies. All the pangs of remorſe, all the tortures of ſelf-reproof, conſpired to drive me frantic:—I ſnatched Miſs Woodford's hand;—I kiſſed it. A feeble

feeble preſſure convinced me that ſhe was not inſenſible to my ſorrow. She endeavoured to ſpeak, to ſmile—but the effort was ſubdued by the interpoſition of Heaven, and the benign angel was not permitted to beſtow on my afflictions the moſt tranſient gleam of conſolation.

The young nobleman ſtood like one that was petrified with aſtoniſhment.—He looked by turns earneſtly at me and at Miſs Woodford—At length, with a tone half ſerious and half jocular, he addreſſed me—

"Hark ye, my hearty, this won't do, by all that's quizzical. This lady is under my protection, and you muſt not think to offend her. So you had better be moving, my honeſt fellow; take yourſelf off—go it—budge—the road lies before you—ſtraight as your noſe.—I don't want to quarrel with you—I hate a row—but you muſt not remain another

ſecond

ſecond in this chamber—unleſs you have a mind to ſport your barking-irons, and finiſh the thing handſomely."

"If you have a right to claim Miſs Woodford's confidence," ſaid I—"if ſhe gives you authority to command my abſence, I ſhall depart. But if ſhe will allow me to protect her, your menaces will be of little importance."

Miſs Woodford waved her hand, as if to check the altercation.

"You ſee, my Lord," ſaid I, "that this is no place for inveſtigating who has and who has not a right here. In the cauſe of humanity every man is authoriſed to follow the dictates of his heart; and I ſhould not deſerve to be ranked with my fellow-creatures, were I capable of deſerting ſuch a woman, and in ſuch a ſituation. I—I am the cauſe of all that Miſs Woodford ſuffers—it is to me that ſhe is indebted for theſe conflicts of mind, which menace even her exiſtence.

exiſtence. But I will ſnatch her from the arms of death—ſhe ſhall not periſh—I will not be her murderer! Look up, Amelia—be comforted—command the wretch who does not deſerve thy pity; and let one honourable action, in ſome degree, prove an extenuation of the folly, the frenzy of his conduct."

"Oh, Walſingham!" ſighed Miſs Woodford, as ſhe hid her face upon her pillow.

"Walſingham!" interrupted the young lord, with evident ſurpriſe, "queer my caxon! are you Walſingham Ainsforth! Here's a kick-up! Why, old Aubrey is waiting at Briſtol to marry little Milly. You played truant, my ſly one; and women are not to be cajoled without ſome ſhew of ſpirit, my hearty. I adviſed her to carry the colonel's knapſack—and ſhe's going to head-quarters under my eſcort. So ſtrike your colours, and beat up for recruits in ſome other diſtrict—little Milly

Milly is no match for you, I promiſe you."

The ſpirit of contradiction began to acquire its uſual aſcendancy over my mind, and the young champion's language only ſerved to augment its powers of reſiſtance. I could not bear his taunting manner; I could not endure the mortification of a refuſal from the juvenile protector of Miſs Woodford. After a ſhort pauſe, I replied, with a tone of marked indignation—" Your commands and Colonel Aubrey's claims are very diſtinct indeed; and I ſhall as firmly reſiſt the one as I ſhall hold the other ſacred. If Amelia can be happy with my friend—the moſt worthy and honourable of men! Heaven can bear witneſs how ſincerely I ſhall exult in her felicity. But if her determination is averſe to ſuch an union, my hand, my life ſhall be dedicated to the promotion of her peace—to the eſtabliſhment of her future tranquillity."

Miſs

Miſs Woodford, raiſing herſelf on her arm, feebly articulated "Never!"

"You ſee that I was right, my hearty," cried the young lord. "You may hand yourſelf off as ſoon as convenient. —So let us adjourn, and drink a bottle of champaign to your ſpeedy conveyance. You ſeem to be a merry fellow, notwithſtanding your wry faces—and nothing ſettles love like a cheerful glaſs and a clear conſcience. Daſh me, what ſignifies repentance?—the thing is done —Milly is going to patch up the buſineſs with the help of a parſon; and Aubrey is a d—d fine fellow, and—ſo there ends the whole matter handſomely. Beſides, my little couſin wants reſt; ſhe has been piping all the way down to Bath—and deviliſh ill into the bargain. Let her alone—ſhe'll come about, and all will be right, if you will but be quiet."

I ſoon found by the converſation of the young nobleman that he was no other than Lord Kencarth; the perſon to whom I had, not long before, offered my ſervices as a travelling tutor. With ſome perſuaſions on his part, and many expreſſive glances from Miſs Woodford, I conſented to quit the room; we ordered breakfaſt, for it was near ſeven o'clock, and in a few minutes retired to another apartment.

Lord Kencarth, notwithſtanding his uncouth language, and affectedly knowing manners, poſſeſſed a generous, brave, and feeling heart. He had been his mother's darling from his infancy; and her nature was ſo affectionately gentle, that the labour of her life was uniformly that of gratifying every wiſh which her ſon could entertain or expreſs. His education had been wholly neglected—his will in every reſpect unconſtrained. He had aſſociated with grooms, been flattered

flattered by dependants, and, by ſtepping from the nurſery to the ſtable, was as uncultivated in mind and manners as though he had been born on a deſart, and reared to manhood in the ſociety of ſavages: yet, his boſom was warmed by thoſe liberal affections, which are ſometimes aliens to the moſt poliſhed and exalted individuals: while his heart never failed to ſympathize, or his hand to ſuccour the unhappy. If the virtues are the aſſociates of a wild unfaſhioned nature, let the poliſhed and the proud bluſh while they contemplate their own deformity!

CHAP. LXIX.

DURING breakfaſt we converſed on Miſs Woodford's ſituation: I found that, ſoon after her return to the houſe of her mother, ſhe became delirious; and, by the advice of Doctor Pimpernel, was removed to a private mad-houſe, of which he was the principal proprietor.

The doctor had travelled much, and had tried all profeſſions, in all climates. The concluſions which he drew from experimental knowledge were theſe—That two-thirds of the breathing race were mad; and that he who could get poſſeſſion of a patient's mind, was more than half aſſured of dominion, whether in a ſtate of convaleſcence or of confirmed inſanity. For this reaſon he ſet up a mind-mill, where he ground the

ſhattered particles of intellect, to his own purpoſe; and when the produce of his labour promiſed either reputation or profit, he never failed to promote the one, or to embrace the other. A huſband who wanted to have a troubleſome wife *taken care of*—a libertine who wiſhed to *provide for* a miſtreſs, when the edge of paſſion became blunted by ſatiety—or a man of refined taſte, who ſought to *ſecure* unguarded innocence, found infinite advantages in the ſubduing atmoſphere of the all-potent mind-mill.

To this ſcene of variegated miſery Miſs Woodford was conveyed, bathed with her mother's tears, and unconſcious of her dreary deſtination; the doctor promiſed to attend her daily, abſolutely forbidding all intercourſe with her family or connections.

Mrs. Woodford's confidence in Doctor Pimpernel's *profeſſional ſkill* was boundleſs; ſhe did not recollect that he

was

was alſo *ſkilled* in *profeſſions*; and that ſincerity was not one of the qualities which characteriſed his mind, in his intercourſe with ſociety. That friend whom he "grappled to his heart with hooks of ſteel" one day—the next he would "caſt like a loathſome weed away." With the little he was the greateſt of men; with the great he ſhrunk into the leaſt! He talked higher and bowed lower than any courtly hater of courts within the atmoſphere of political warfare. Like the vanes of a ſteeple, he ſoared above every other object, and was perpetually turning to all points without fixing to any. Born in one country, educated in another, a traveller in a third, and a citizen of a fourth, he had acquired a ſmattering of every language—a *guſto* for every folly, a degree of notoriety in all, but a portion of reputation in none. He had written books that nobody read, and related wonders

which nobody credited. His mind was a ſort of ſalmagundi of Hibernian aſſurrance, Scottiſh erudition, Italian ſhrewdneſs, Iberian pride, Gallic philoſophy, and Engliſh apathy—the one perpetually ſtruggling with the other, without either, for a moment, obtaining the aſcendancy. Born in Ireland, educated in Scotland, poliſhed in Italy, and bronzed in Britain—he was originally intended for the church; but the circumſcribed limits of his theological reſearches excluded him from the interior of the holy ſanctuary, and confined the ſpecimens of his art to the ſadly ſolemn precincts of the churchyard, where innumerable monuments will remain to the end of time, of his induſtry, ſkill, popularity, and experience.

Miſs Woodford had been confined ſeveral days, when the ſilence of her ſecluſion was broke in upon by a viſit from the Duke of Heartwing; and her

weary

weary eyes were at length open to all the horrors of her ſituation. The cold contempt with which ſhe treated his philanthropic viſit—for every eccentricity is now honoured with that exalted title—convinced his Grace that her intellects ſtill retained the ſtrong power of diſcriminating the immeaſurable diſtance betwixt humanity and oſtentation. She received him with the marked and unaſſuming propriety of good-breeding, while he diſplayed that conſciouſneſs of ſuperior rank which chilled her boſom, as the lofty barren ſummit of Plinlimmon towers above the calm but fertile valley, which diſplays the gifts of nature, even amidſt the glooms that would overwhelm it.

The aſtoniſhment and diſdain which filled Miſs Woodford's boſom was, by her illuſtrious viſitor, miſtaken for the timidity of awed reſpect; while, in pro-

portion as ſhe ſmothered her indignation, he grew great in ſelf-importance, proving the forbearance of ſuffering worth, when oppoſed to the pride of adventitious conſequence. With kind and ſympathiſing pity the noble viſitor lamented her misfortunes, commiſerated her ſituation, and with the ſame breath, turning to Doctor Pimpernel, ridiculed her ſorrow-ſtricken looks, remarked the ruthleſs ravages of undeſerved affliction, and pompouſly took his leave, to ſeek the ſociety of men without feeling, and women without ſhame! Little did this proud epitome, this breathing picture of exalted life, reflect, that

All outward ſemblance of attractive grace,
Hereditary ſplendours, beauty, valour,
Wit, learning, fancy, eloquence divine!
Where godlike VIRTUE dwells not in the ſoul,
May feed upon the vapour Adulation,
And boaſt an unſubſtantial glitt'ring name,
That dazzles only for a fleeting day:

While

While innate GLORY ſhall outſtrip the grave,
And ſhine, when all of pageantry and pride
(Like the falſe meteor on the wings of night)
Shall waſte in empty air*!"

CHAP. LXX.

THE viſit which Miſs Woodford received from the Duke of Heartwing, rouſed her torpid ſpirits to a new exertion; ſhe had, previous to her confinement, received a letter from Colonel Aubrey, liberally offering her his hand, and promiſing to bury her indiſcretion in eternal oblivion. This noble and generous conduct may be condemned by the faſtidious; but it will not fail to excite admiration in the boſom that is ſoftened by humanity. There are few men, born and educated in the great world, who would take to their arms a

* Sicilian Lover.

repentant wanderer, and allow, that a life of ſober virtue has power to compenſate for the criminality of a ſingle moment: but there are many who will readily reſign their domeſtic treaſure to the licentious embraces of another, and even glory in the boaſt of being wedded to a ſanctioned wanton! Which of the two is the moſt honourable character, I ſhall leave modern ſophiſts to determine: my opinion has long been deciſive on the ſubject.

After a week's ſeclusion Miſs Woodford eſcaped from her den of perſecution, and, not knowing whither to ſeek an aſylum, paſſed the night of her emancipation in wandering about the fields near Hampſtead. Soon after day-break ſhe was diſcovered by Mr. Optic, who had heard of her confinement, and was haſtening to appriſe her of her ſituation. Fainting with fatigue and nearly exhauſted for want of nouriſhment, ſhe

ſunk

ſunk into his arms as he approached her; and the only power which was left her to expreſs her ſorrows, or her ſenſe of his kindneſs, was that of tears; they flowed abundantly—they drew from his feeling heart a ſympathetic tribute, which ſtoics may ſmile at, but which ſenſibility would be proud to boaſt as its pureſt, ſweeteſt attribute! His was not the ſuperficial oſtentation of humanity—His ideas of friendſhip are beſt known by his own claſſical and harmonious delineation—

——"By friendſhip's ſkill divine,
All ſcenes delight—all ſeaſons ſhine;
That, when the ſtorms of winter roll,
With conſtant ſpring can charm the ſoul,
And bid the roſe of pleaſure blow,
'Mid poverty's ſurrounding ſnow."

As ſoon as Miſs Woodford was awakened from the dream of aſtoniſhment which Mr. Optic's preſence had occa-

ſioned, ſhe intreated that he would conduct her to her mother. He obeyed, and attended her to that home which maternal fondneſs never cloſed againſt her. But her chagrin was infinite when a ſtrange ſervant informed her, that Mrs. Woodford, her health being greatly impaired by ſorrow for the abſence and mental derangement of her daughter, had, by the perſuaſions of Doctor Pimpernel, conſented the ſame morning to ſet out with Lady Kencarth for Briſtol. She alſo received farther intelligence, that Colonel Aubrey was at that port, waiting to ſail for Gibraltar; and that Mr. Ainsforth had departed for Glenowen, to form a matrimonial alliance with Miſs Hanbury.—The laſt erroneous report, I afterwards found, had been conveyed to Miſs Woodford by the deſire of Sir Sidney Aubrey. Mr. Optic attended the fair fugitive to the houſe of Lady Kencarth, where

where ſhe found her thoughtleſs but generous couſin the Viſcount, that inſtant ſetting out for Briſtol. He offered her his protection; and ſhe knew his heart. They therefore departed together, after pouring forth a thouſand grateful acknowledgments for Mr. Optic's kind and benevolent interference.

The brief narrative being ended, I could not forbear to expreſs my indignation at the malignant folly of Sir Sidney Aubrey. It ſeemed as if he knew no gratification in life equal to that of perſecuting me. He had already wreſted every hope from my boſom, by depriving me of Iſabella, and, with a miſchievous delight, which was the very wantonneſs of cruelty, he endeavoured to prevent my making an honourable recompence for the wrongs I had heaped upon Miſs Woodford. His only delight, thought I, is the pleaſure of irritating my weary mind, in hopes that I

ſhall fly from perſecution to the quiet of a grave! Then, ſhall I yield; and by expiring prove myſelf a coward? Shall I leave a wretch to revel in thoſe joys, of which he has made me bankrupt? Shall the little tyranny of infancy ripen into mature oppreſſion, and my deſpot live to triumph? Theſe tacit queſtions, originating in the juſt indignation of offended pride, rebounded on my heart, and bruiſed its aching fibres. I writhed beneath the agony of thought, till reſentment fixing in my breaſt, anticipated revenge—final, exemplary, terrible revenge.

The next ſenſation that poſſeſſed my mind was compunction for my conduct towards Miſs Woodford; for it has ever been a decided opinion in my mind, that the man who firſt ſeduces a woman from the paths of chaſtity is acceſſary to all the ills that may await her during the remaining hours of her exiſtence. To him the

the aching mind applies for ſolace, the trembling boſom for protection, the cloſing eye for that mild and contrite tear, which ſhould embalm the duſt, polluted by his paſſions. Are theſe the offices of modern gallantry? are ſuch the graced attentions evinced by the exiſting race of man? For what does the lover in theſe enlightened times ſeduce his unſuſpecting victim?—For the vanity of conqueſt! Whom does he conſider in the triumph of ſenſuality?—Himſelf! What breaſt will contemn the libertine in the circles of congenial depravity?—None! Then where is woman to ſeek for that oblivion of thought which can alone render her exiſtence tolerable?—Either in a daring round of diſſipation, or in the grave!

I was roufed from my reverie by the appearance of Miſs Woodford. Merciful God! how did my heart throb when I beheld her—emaciated, trembling, and feeble as ſhe ſtood before me!

I flew

I flew towards her, ſhe ſunk upon a chair, and, burſting into tears, overwhelmed me with affliction. Lord Kencarth, during my reverie, had quitted the room, and I had once more an opportunity of pouring forth the anguiſh of my heart at the feet of my unfortunate victim. I conjured her to tranquillize her mind, —to unfold the determinations of her boſom; and, if ſhe was ſtill averſe to an union with Colonel Aubrey, to beſtow on me that hand which would do honour to my family.

She looked earneſtly at me during ſeveral minutes. The tenderneſs of expiring paſſion tempered the ſtern gaze of indignation, and with a firm impreſſive tone, ſhe anſwered—"Never, Walſingham! Oh! *never!* The delirium of affection is over; and the pride of inſulted love now claims dominion in my boſom. Since I could not faſcinate your mind by the purity of virtue,

I am

I am neither ſo vain nor ſo believing as to hope, that, robbed of the jewel reputation, you will reſpect my feelings, or ſooth them into ſelf-acquittal; the pride of my heart has outlived the purity of my fame. If I was beneath your protection and eſteem, I am ſtill above your pity."

"Honour me, at leaſt, with your friendſhip," ſaid I.

"I will not promiſe you even that," replied Miſs Woodford. "Friendſhip may rapidly ripen into love; but love requires a length of time before it can ſoften into friendſhip. A thouſand gradations muſt mark a diminution of the intereſting emotions of the heart, which are wholly different from thoſe of a mental nature. The cold reſpect of friendſhip is an inſult to the memory of love; for the deſpot who 'rules a tyrant, if he rules at all,' having once been in poſſeſſion of unbounded ſway, will

will not condeſcend to become a penſioner on the mental charity of his vaſſal, till the reign of dominion is recommenced by a new ſource of triumphs, and another object occupies the mournful vacuum, which is ſtill aching in the boſom. Men may talk of ſober friendſhip growing out of deeply-rooted love: it is a fine romantic ſpecies of ſophiſtry, invented by caprice to ſooth the victims of a deluded faith; a pleaſing, placid maſk, calculated to conceal the ſickening features of diſguſt, and to cheat the ſenſes with a ſhadow of that paſſion, which time, and the fickleneſs of folly, have completely vanquiſhed."

"You think too ſeverely of our ſex," ſaid I, "when you ſuppoſe that reſpect, eſteem, and friendſhip, ceaſe with love."

"Ah, Walſingham!" replied Miſs Woodford, ſhaking her head with a melan-

melancholy expreſſion, "you know not the meaning of the word. There is only one ſort of love, but there are a thouſand different copies of it*."

"What was the attachment of Heloiſe to St. Preux?" ſaid I.

"Love," replied Amelia. "The great delineator of Nature, who formed thoſe imaginary beings, knew that it was love. The rectitude of a finely organized mind may teach it to fulfil the duties of domeſtic life with decency and honour: gratitude may inſure attention, and moral virtue be the baſis of fidelity: but all this may be done at the ſame moment that the ſenſes are poſſeſſed, and the boſom animated by tenderer, warmer affections for another object. I could be the lover of my friend; but the vanity of the human heart will not,

* "Il n'y a que d'une ſorte d'amour; mais il y en a mille differentes copies."

ROCHEFOUCAULD.

till

till after every trace of paſſion is exterminated, permit us to be the friend of him whom it has once acknowledged as a lover. I do not pretend to aſſert, that the ardent fondneſs of the paſſion, the tender hopes, the zealous aſſiduities, which characteriſe a lover in the early enthuſiaſm of purſuit, can laſt beyond poſſeſſion of their object: theſe do not conſtitute love; they are the mere appendages, worn on the holiday of expectation, and caſt off when reaſon points out a milder, purer ſource of pleaſure. The mind then embraces a more ſolid gratification; the object of its affection—for I will not admit of its cold ſhadow friendſhip—then becomes a part of our exiſtence. We find it as cloſely united with vitality, as the air we breathe; it is a ſort of ſecond ſelf, which muſt either be acknowledged as ſuch, or, being torn by violence from its natural home, become an alien for ever."

"Is there not a pure ſenſation which may be felt when the ardent paſſions become harmonized by time and nature?" ſaid I.

"Unqueſtionably," anſwered Miſs Woodford; "but ſtill it is love, not friendſhip. That being does not deſerve the proud diſtinction, the tranſcendent merit of truly loving, who could not paſs a life of calm enjoyment wholly uncontaminated by every ſenſual motive; who could not retain the rich and ſacred impulſe of the ſoul, not only amidſt the buſy, dark viciſſitudes of fortune, but even in a ſtate of laſting ſeparation."

I ſighed at the idea—ſhe continued—after a glance of reproof, which I felt more than I ſhould have done the ſevereſt reproaches—

"How ſceptical was that emotion of your heart!" ſaid ſhe. "But it is the cuſtom of your ſex to doubt the enthuſiaſm

ſiaſm of our's in points of affection, till we are taught to ſuſpect it ourſelves; and that ſincerity, which requires a watch over its thoughts and actions, will ſoon feel an inclination to revolt. We may indulge the glowing illuſions of fancy till we teach ourſelves to think them real, particularly if the chimeras which they preſent are pleaſing to the mind, or gratifying to the ſenſes. By ſuch ſoothing deceptions, the ſhadows of caprice grow into ſubſtantial joys, till time invigorates the ſpring of affection, and the faſcination becomes not only ſtrong, but laſting. Theſe are the cauſes and effects of pure and genuine attachment, ſpringing from, and exiſting only in minds of a peculiar and exalted caſt: the ſelfiſh ſenſualiſt was not born to know them."

"Yet I cannot help thinking, that more real felicity owes its birth to friendſhip than to love," ſaid I.

"That

"That point I will not diſpute with you," replied Miſs Woodford; "but the heart muſt have ſome ſtrong and intereſting ſenſation of attachment, or it will become an aching vacuum, believe me. Call it friendſhip, call it love: but whichever name you give it, remember that it muſt ſtand alone; it muſt not be dependent on another ſpecies of enchantment, or originate in any remote impreſſion on the paſſions."

"I am rather inclined to think that apathy is more deſirable than either," ſaid I; "and that to eſcape the pangs of ſenſibility, I would readily relinquiſh its enjoyments."

"How falſe is ſuch reaſoning!" interrupted Miſs Woodford. "I recollect the words of an elegant writer, who ſays, 'Is there a man upon the face of the earth who would deliberately accept of all the wealth, and all the affluence this world can beſtow, if offered to him upon

upon the ſevere terms of his being unconnected with a ſingle mortal whom he could love, or by whom he ſhould be beloved *?"

We were interrupted by the arrival of a courier, who came to announce the approach of Mrs. Woodford and Colonel Aubrey. Amelia's cheek turned pale, and the blood ſuddenly forſook her lip, as ſhe ſunk into my arms, overwhelmed with contending emotions. I knew not what to do: I could not think of leaving her in ſuch a ſituation, and I knew, at the ſame time, that to be diſcovered with Miſs Woodford, whom I had renounced, apparently, would convey ſuſpicions injurious to my ſincerity, and fatal to her laſt hope of happineſs.

After ſeveral minutes had elapſed,—minutes, no leſs perilous to her than painful to myſelf,—I obſerved the firſt

* Melmoth's Tranſlation of Cicero's Lælius.

tinge

tinge of returning circulation, caſting a feeble fluſh over her cheek, and on her lip, which quivered as ſhe addreſſed me.

"Oh, Walſingham!" ſaid ſhe, with a feeble tone of intreaty, "I conjure you to depart,—to leave me, for ever. Your preſence will be but a poor return for Colonel Aubrey's generous conduct, —though a certain ſource of agony to my afflicted parent. You have once involved me in the deepeſt abyſs of miſery; do not again expoſe me to contempt and ſorrow. You cannot, oh, Walſingham! you will not, a ſecond time, be the deſtroyer of Colonel Aubrey's hopes;—for, with all my frailties, all my imperfections, he ſtill loves me."

The recollection of what I had long felt for Iſabella, convinced me that the human heart will ſometimes linger round the very ſhadow of departed hopes:—that "though we are driven from the

ſanctuary, our thoughts ſtill cleave to the threſhold."

"Can you be happy with Colonel Aubrey?" ſaid I.

Miſs Woodford ſighed, and her eyes uttered a thouſand anſwers, which her tongue had not power to expreſs. At laſt, with a faultering articulation, ſhe replied, "I can be tranquil; I can be reſigned; I ſhall obey a dear and adored parent; I ſhall prove my gratitude to a worthy—honourable man; and I ſhall quit this ſcene of painful humiliation—for ever."

Lord Kencarth now ruſhed into the room:—"Walſingham," cried he, "by all that is fair and honourable, you muſt inſtantly be off; or my pretty coz will, by prozing with you, loſe a huſband who will patch up the flaws you have made in her reputation.—Come, my hearty, kiſs little Milly, and bid her farewel.

farewel.—What has paſſed muſt be forgotten, and ſhe'll make a better wife than half her acquaintances after all." Then turning towards Miſs Woodford he exclaimed, "Daſh my wig! why, Milly, what a doleful phiz you make! You look as though you hadn't a ſmile left to pay the parſon. Quiz me, coz, why I ſhou'dn't wonder if you ſung the black pſalm, when you ſhould be queering us with love, honour, and obey.—Cheer up, my neat one! brighten your ſparklers, and tip old wigſby a twitch of the heart, in return for his gold padlock. Why, if you pipe your eye, and ſport your glum mazzard at the church door,—diſh me! but the joiner will fly off in a tangent, and you'll get no ſpouſy after all, little Milly."

"Walſingham! I conjure you, once more, to begone," ſaid Miſs Woodford, turning aſide to conceal a tear, which all her couſin's uncouth raillery could not repel.

I advanced towards the door, and at the moment when I was bound by honour, delicacy, and gratitude, to relinquiſh her for ever, I firſt began to feel a wiſh, which owed its origin to my perverſe nature, ever prone to reſiſt where conſtraint was neceſſary; and had there been no ſuch being upon earth as Colonel Aubrey, I ſhould at that moment have proudly claimed the name of huſband from the unhappy and neglected Amelia.

Mrs. Woodford's arrival with Colonel Aubrey compelled me to quit the room. I had not reſolution to utter a ſingle adieu, but haſtened to my chamber; where, after paſſing a few minutes in buſy mingling rumination, I ordered a chaiſe, with poſt-horſes, to be got ready immediately.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.